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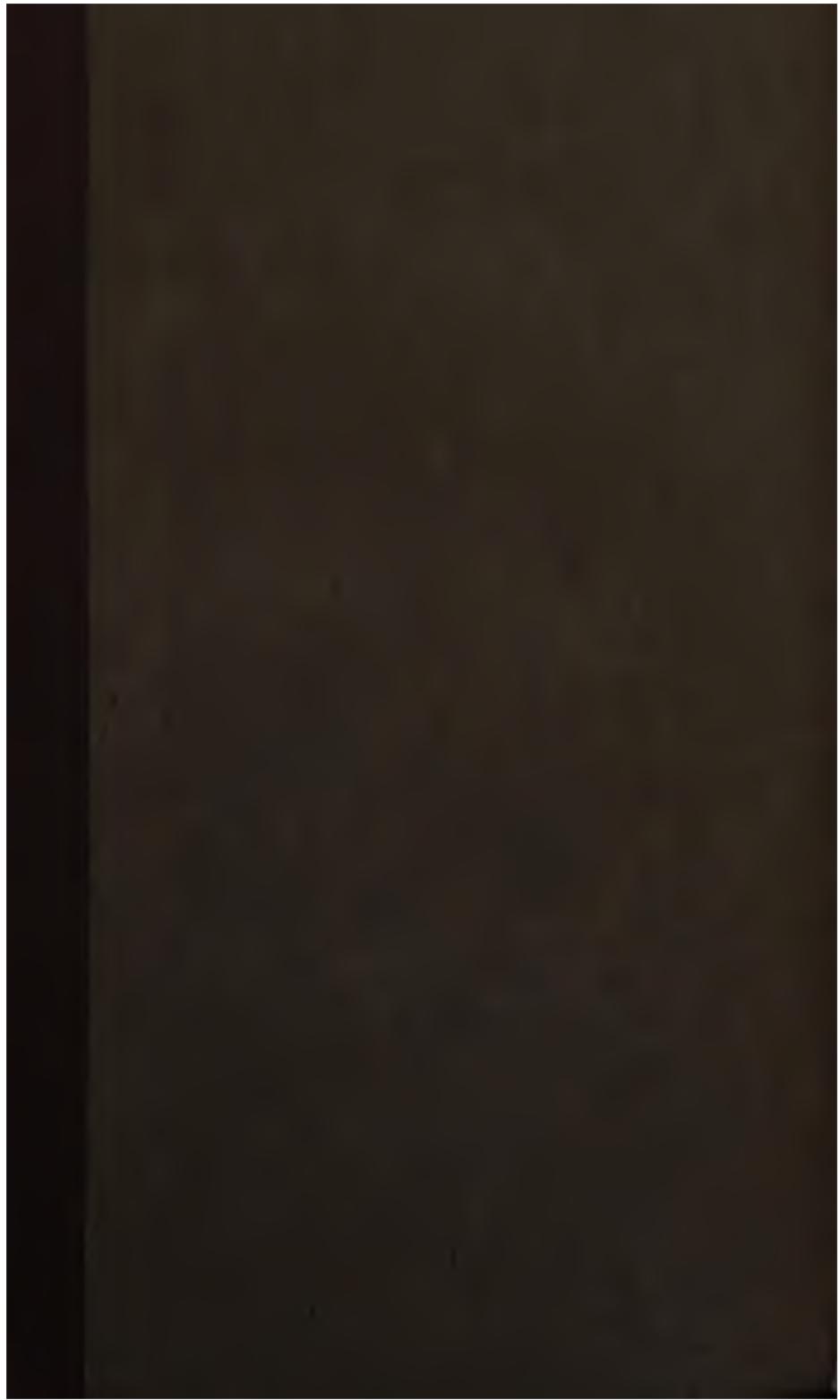
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47. 1380.





ERRATUM.—VOL. III.

Page 223, line 14, after "fearful," insert "crimes."

[REDACTED]



HARDEN HALL.

VOL. III.

HARDEN HALL;

OR,

THE THREE PROPOSALS.

A Novel.

EDITED BY THE HON. F— B—

"While memory watches o'er the sad review,
Of joys that faded like the morning dew;
Peace may depart—and life and nature seem,
A barren path—a wildness and a dream."

CAMPBELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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HARDEN HALL.

CHAPTER I.

DURING the events narrated in the last chapter of the preceding volume, Lady Sandford and her daughters had been at the sea-side, and the all-important personage Miss Rabbit with them. The latter had kept up a constant correspondence with Mr. Hawkins ever since their first meeting, on the subject of Lord Sandford's marriage; and it was with great pleasure that she heard of the apparent change in his sentiments towards Miss Selby: for she looked upon that as very decisive. However, two and even three weeks passed, and no communication took place between them. She had always been fully alive to Lord Sandford's good opinion of herself, and had always envied

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B

Miss Selby as a successful rival : for, preposterous as was the idea, she entertained serious thoughts of being herself the countess. Mr. Hawkins soon discovered this, and working upon that feeling, without apparently knowing that it existed, by dexterously throwing out hints that Miss Selby was not exactly fit to be the wife of Lord Sandford, he impressed Miss Rabbit with such an idea of his wisdom, that he could persuade her to act in everything according to his wishes. Ever since they had quitted Harden Hall, she had endeavoured to inspire Lady Sandford with disgust at her son's choice, continually reminding her that Miss Selby was no heiress. This was the only objection she could make to the connexion ; for Miss Selby's family was quite as good as the illustrious house of Sandford, and the young lady herself allowed by all to be faultless.

Any other person than Lady Sandford would have desired Miss Rabbit to be silent, and not meddle with other people's affairs ; but her ladyship had an unfortunate knack of not being able to decide anything of importance herself : on the contrary, she was in the habit of discussing publicly whatever concerned herself or her children. We have be-

fore said, that Miss Rabbit possessed strong intellectual powers, and sound judgment on many subjects, and that Lady Sandford scarcely dared to call her soul her own when she was present; it is not, therefore, wonderful that some disparaging remarks, daily repeated, should at last have some effect in weaning her affections from Miss Selby. Mr. Hawkins's praise was continually sounded in her ladyship's ears: "he was so good, so everything," as Elizabeth used to say, that she was quite tired to death of constantly hearing his name, and heartily wished her brother had never met with him. How much more earnestly would she have wished this, if she had known all that was passing at college.

It was towards the end of March that the Lady Elizabeth Sandford was startled at receiving a letter in Catherine's handwriting, with "private" on it. She received it among many others at the breakfast-table; and so great was her desire to read it, that she could scarcely restrain her impatience through the business of a long breakfast. She saw that every letter she opened was scrutinized by Miss Rabbit: but to this she was accustomed; for it was one of that person's very disagreeable

practices to watch all the actions of every one present, while apparently quite unconscious that any one was in the room. The moment Elizabeth could escape from her mother she ran to her own room, and locking the door threw herself down on a chair. Her hand trembled so much, she could scarcely open the letter : a presentiment of some dreadful misfortune came over her, and she gasped for breath. Tearing the letter open, she began to read : but the first word struck her motionless with surprise and horror : she read all that her dearest friend had suffered from the cruelty and ill-behaviour of an unprincipled man, and that man her own brother. The bitterness of that moment she imagined could never be exceeded, when that brother, whom she had so fondly deemed perfect, showed himself worse than dishonourable, and destitute of all affection and right feeling.

" But there must be some mistake," said she, aloud ; " it cannot be ;" and again and again she read Catherine's letter : it was so gentle, so forgiving : no angry words, no harsh expressions. She merely told Elizabeth the simple truth, and ended by entreating her to write instantly, and tell her what Sand-

ford was about, as she had not heard from him for more than a month. His behaviour appeared so inexplicable to his sister, that she remained lost in painful thoughts for more than an hour. The brightest dream that poet ever imagined could not, she well knew, surpass that bright vision of happiness which Catherine had pictured to herself; and how to write to her, now that all was at an end—at least for the present—she knew not. Many times she threw down the pen in despair; till driven half crazy by the recollection of her brother's perfidy, she sat down and determined to have some communication with him first. She conjured him, in the strongest manner, to explain to her what had occasioned this change: she painted, in the most vivid colours, Catherine's anguish and misery; her devotion to him; and again and again she urged him instantly to implore her forgiveness: for that he really meant to desert her, she could not, she would not, believe till she heard it from his own lips. She then wrote to Catherine, and told her what she had done; begging her, for her own sake, and for her mother's, that she would endeavour to bear up against her grief, as she trusted all

might yet be satisfactorily explained. Alas ! she feared how vain was such advice. She blamed her brother, but not too harshly ; she knew enough of Catherine's love for him to be convinced that crying him down would not console her. Her letter was more one of deep and kind sympathy than anything else ; and as such it was most acceptable to Catherine.

Deeply did Catherine regret that Elizabeth was not at Harden Hall, that she might have had the comfort of the society of her friend, who would have shared her griefs with her.

Two days after this, Lady Sandford and her family moved to London, where it was settled they should remain for some months.

It required all Mr. Hawkins's powers of persuasion to convince Lord Sandford that this marriage could never be productive of happiness, but would ultimately lead to misery, from the great dissimilarity of their characters : and yet, in spite of his sister's passionate remonstrances to write at once to Catherine and entreat her pardon, Sandford still hesitated : he imagined he could easily obtain it, and he knew he should then be happier. But by some excuse or another Mr. Hawkins contrived never to let him out of his

sight for three days ; and then, when he began to search for his sister's letter, it could nowhere be found ; so he gave it up in despair, and merely scratched off a few lines to his sister, saying, that everything between Miss Selby and himself was at an end ; and that, as he was nearly of age, he begged she would not in future interfere with his affairs. His pen was soon passed through these harsh and unkind words to a sister who all her life had been so tenderly attached to him, and other words were substituted ; but he ended as he began, by entreating her not again to mention Miss Selby to him. No reason was given for this strange, unaccountable conduct ; and Elizabeth now really despaired of ever seeing him again devoted to her dear friend.

What course to pursue she hardly knew : whether to tell her mother or not : at length she decided it was better to do so ; but what was her indignation and surprise at perceiving that Lady Sandford, far from being grieved at what had occurred, although she pretended great regret, was inwardly rejoiced. Miss Rabbit could scarcely conceal her satisfaction that this match was broken off, and said a great deal about childish attachments

generally ending in nothing ; adding that for some time she had felt convinced that it would be the case. With a look of the most unutterable dislike and disgust, Elizabeth begged she would remember she was speaking of her brother.

The insolence of this woman increased daily : from being governess to the children, she had become companion to Lady Sandford, and now she had the entire management of everything ; constituting herself mistress of Harden Hall and all its inmates. She flattered her ladyship incessantly ; who was always looking for it, and never happy if Miss Rabbit was absent. To Lady Elizabeth, however, she was particularly disagreeable ; and seeing that her announcement had met with a very different reception to what she expected, she again sought refuge in her own room. While Lord Sandford was thus by his conduct causing so much pain and grief to beings whom he at the same time so fondly loved, though he used his utmost endeavours to banish Catherine from his thoughts, yet he could not do so. Many were the times he was on the point of writing to her and confessing all : but his evil genius prevailed, and he still postponed it from day

to day. It was so contrary to his naturally kind disposition intentionally to cause pain to any one, and his conscience smote him when he reflected that the first sorrow—the first trial Catherine ever experienced should have been caused by him. He despised himself most thoroughly : he longed to see Catherine. Her father's letter remained unanswered ; and he had heard that man, who had in every respect acted as a father and friend to him, abused in every way by Mr. Hawkins, without attempting to vindicate his character. And yet the next moment he might be seen walking arm in arm with Mr. Hawkins, discussing church reform, laxity of principle, and want of firmness in the dignitaries of the church. Happy would it have been for him, if he had remembered that what produces misery amongst numbers is generally productive of it individually.

CHAPTER II.

LONDON, without a large acquaintance, is perhaps the most melancholy place to live in that can be found in England: the meeting multitudes of people all apparently intent on some object of interest, without seeing one face that is familiar to you, is agreed by all to be most saddening: the Desert would be preferable to that desolation which one feels after returning from a walk or ride without having met one kind friend, or received one friendly greeting.

So thought Lady Elizabeth Sandford as she returned one afternoon from a long drive with her mother. It was early in the season, though the increasing number of carriages showed that every hour added vast numbers of visitors to the great metropolis. So many years had elapsed since Lady Sandford had resided in town, not having been there once since her

husband's death, that she literally knew no one. Great was her regret at this, on her daughter's account: but Lady Elizabeth, always cheerful, was highly amused when she heard of Mrs. Mogg and Mrs. Dodd being at the top of the tree of fashionable life, while she herself and her mother were overlooked and never invited, even by those who in former days had been glad enough to attend her father's parties. **As they were sitting at work together one day, they were surprised at the arrival of a visitor, who was announced as Mr. Irby.**

At the moment, Lady Sandford did not remember him: but it was for an instant only; for she soon recognised one of her husband's oldest friends, though twenty years had elapsed since they had last met. Lady Elizabeth was much pleased with his appearance and manners. He remained some time; and as he took his leave, he said he had been commissioned by Lady Julia Read to inquire whether Lady Sandford would allow her to call: that having formerly known some of the family, she wished much to pay her respects to her. Lady Sandford expressed great pleasure at being remembered by Lady Julia Read, and how glad she would be to renew her acquain-

tance with her ladyship. Mr. Irby begged her to understand distinctly that she was no friend of his, and that he did not like either her or her husband, or their manner of going on : but he had met them the night before, when they asked him if he knew Lady Sandford ; and on his saying that he had enjoyed that pleasure years ago, they begged that he would introduce them.

After Mr. Irby's departure, Lady Sandford could not help observing that she supposed things were differently arranged now from what they had been twenty years ago ; but that a visit from Lady Julia could do no harm, and might lead to some gaiety for Elizabeth. As for Elizabeth, she cared little just then for gaiety ; she was so grieved for Catherine, so distressed at Sandford's behaviour, that she felt little inclination to mix in the gay world : but, knowing that her mother was really making these exertions to get into society solely on her account, she thanked her tenderly, and only begged she would not do too much.

The following day, at three o'clock, a smart, gay, dashing equipage stopped at Lady Sandford's door, and a large, vulgar, perhaps

almost coarse-looking woman, was ushered up stairs and announced as Lady Julia Read. She began a thousand apologies for intruding on Lady Sandford, but said that she had once, at some ball, been introduced to her ladyship before they both married; and though her ladyship had no reason to remember her, yet it was very different with Lady Sandford, for that no one who had ever seen her could possibly forget her. So gross was her flattery that Lady Elizabeth could scarcely endure it: but her mother swallowed it all, and thought Lady Julia extremely agreeable and cordial; and ended by accepting an invitation to dine at her house the following day.

Lady Julia quickly saw that the young lady was made of very different materials from her mother; and she inwardly wished all young ladies were so well drilled as to prevent their having opinions of their own, and giving themselves such airs. She then turned the conversation on Miss Selby, and spoke of knowing her intimately—as being one of her numerous admirers, and having seen her frequently at Mr. Lyndsay's. Lady Elizabeth looked rather incredulous as she heard this. As Lady Julia proceeded, it appeared that her praises

of Catherine rather diminished : she thought that perhaps sometimes Miss Selby had a little too much vivacity and spirit,—too much liveliness. Again, she observed that she knew of her having refused several good offers, and that Miss Selby looked very high, considering she had nothing and was nobody.

Here Lady Elizabeth's indignation could not be restrained, and she coloured excessively, as she replied, " You forget, Lady Julia Read, or indeed are not perhaps aware, that you are talking of one who is in every respect a most delightful person ;—she is my greatest friend,—my"—my brother's affianced bride she would have said, but tears rushed to her eyes, and prevented her giving utterance to the last sentence. " As to her having refused several offers, it is likely enough that one so young, so loveable, so pretty, should be very much admired ; but I apprehend she will have no occasion to wait very long before she changes her name, if she is so inclined. I hope that henceforward your ladyship will never say anything unkind of Miss Selby, as she is my particular friend."

Lady Julia's anger at this speech was inconceivable : she looked aghast with rage and

astonishment. The good, the kind Lady Elizabeth, who had not attained her twentieth year, had at bay this bold, fierce woman of fifty ; who muttered some sort of apology, and hastily took her leave.

Scarcely had Lady Julia taken her departure, when Lady Sandford reprimanded her daughter for her rudeness. Elizabeth acknowledged that, perhaps, she had been rather hasty, but avowed that it was impossible to remain unmoved when Lady Julia was so unjustly trying to pick Catherine's character to pieces : she never could do so. And she only hoped that if Lady Julia thought her impertinent, her ladyship would never trouble them again ; for she thought her the most odious person she had ever seen.

On this point, Lady Sandford disagreed with her daughter entirely. She knew, from the first, that there was some little disagreement between the lovers ; but that the match would be entirely broken off never occurred to her.

What had become of Miss Rabbit that day, no one knew : she had left home early in the morning, and had not yet returned. Perhaps, had our readers gone to a large house in Manchester Square, they might have learned some-

thing of her, from what passed in the boudoir there. A very thin, spare man was likewise present; and a long conversation had taken place relative to one of our principal personages: the results will be seen hereafter.

Lady Julia's visit to Lady Sandford had brought on another slight attack of temporary insanity. She was now under the hands of Howell: yes, gentle readers, well may you shudder at the bare idea of her being in the power of such a wretch. She had obtained unlimited influence over her ladyship; and daily threatened, even if her most trifling demands were refused, to produce publicly Mr. Read's child, and so bring infamy on all his family. Lady Julia was in dread that something might occur to bring to light the existence of this child: she feared the contempt of man,—the justice of a higher power she dreaded not. Howell was the only person who had the least authority over her; and this was kept up by daily fear and threats. By such means Howell obtained unbounded control: what use she made of this influence will be seen hereafter.

Lady Julia Read, when she returned home after her visit to Lady Sandford, rejoiced with this *amiable* woman Howell, on the success of

her first proposal. She told her all that had passed, which was highly approved of; but when she spoke of Lady Elizabeth's indignation, her Abigail saw that there was every chance of such violent excitement producing one of those fits to which Lady Julia was subject, unless stopped immediately; she, therefore, gave orders to the effect that the unfortunate lady should retire to her own room without speaking another word. For once, Lady Julia felt tempted to rebel: but when she saw those fearful eyes fixed on her with a look of stern determination, she gave way, and hastily retreated to her boudoir.

After Lady Julia's departure, the miserably wretched Howell remained for several minutes lost in thought: now was the time when she should reap some advantages from Miss Selby: all that she had hoped, all that she had wished for, had actually come to pass. Lord Sandford had cooled towards Miss Selby—had not written for more than a month; and his mother was in town, and, like all silly women, was very easily led. "Yes," she continued to herself, "I shall not have lived in wretched dependence, and even in guilt for nothing. I shall not have given myself up to Lady Julia's

wicked machinations in vain. All I have done was to forward Miss Selby's marriage with young Read: she disappointed him, she disappointed me,—robbed me of the harvest that I had expected to glean: but she shall not be happy; she shall not marry Lord Sandford. No——” and here the wretched woman swore a tremendous oath that her life should be devoted to make Catherine unhappy; on whose account she had been led to commit that theft which had been her first step in actual vice, and from which she had as yet gained no advantage. Her hatred, her rancour against this innocent and amiable girl, was really quite inexpressible. Lady Julia had skilfully insinuated that it was through Miss Selby alone that Howell could hope for promotion and high rewards, and she was bitterly disappointed when she heard that far from wishing to marry Mr. Read, Catherine quite loathed the sound of his name. A thought suddenly struck her; she ran up-stairs to Lady Julia, whom she found much better, and perfectly still, though a slight shudder pervaded her frame as Howell entered, who sat down close to her, with an assumption of familiarity that in former days would have horrified Lady Julia,

but which now she could not resist. Howell told her that the next evening she must talk to Lady Sandford, as if quite unconscious that there existed any engagement between her son and Miss Selby, and hint her want of money, which would certainly be a great object to many young men; and then insinuate that she knew several who had both riches and rank, and in short everything that could be desired. Lady Julia promised implicit obedience; upon which Howell, having given her a strong dose of laudanum, left her till next morning.

It was without any pleasure that Lady Elizabeth Sandford dressed herself to attend Lady Julia's dinner the next evening; she disliked her manner, and her appearance particularly. She had that morning received a most melancholy letter from Catherine, who had always treated her as a sister. She had not again heard from her brother; and she felt grieved, deeply grieved, that anything could prevent that affectionate intercourse which had always before subsisted between them. She strove, however, to conceal her sorrows: and how many of those who appear the brightest and gayest in society, give them-

selves up to the enjoyment of the scene before them, banishing all painful thoughts. Happy are those who can do so ; and who, even if they are suffering bitter trials from disappointed hopes, can yet laugh, and dance, and sing, with the gayest and most light-hearted. Certain it is, that no one who could have seen Lady Elizabeth that evening, looking so bright and so animated, laughing and talking with every one, would have imagined she had with difficulty been induced to join the party ; or that she had gone more to please her mother than herself.

On entering the room, the first person that caught Elizabeth's eye was an old bustling woman, in a dark-green gown, with red ribbons in her cap. There was something very high-bred and *distingué* about her, though her eyes, which we understand had been the great beauty of her youth, had unfortunately contracted a slight squint : with the exception of this defect, she was a fine-looking person. Elizabeth fancied that she must have seen her before : her features were familiar, and she was altogether pleased with her appearance. Lady Julia Read hastened to the door, in much shorter time than it has taken us to de-

scribe one of her visitors, to receive Lady Sandford and her daughter, and to assure them she was highly flattered and honoured. "And now," said she, "you must allow me to introduce you to the Dowager Lady Brooke :" and turning round she led them towards the identical old lady of whom we have been speaking. As soon as her name was mentioned, Elizabeth recognised it ; though she did not immediately remember where she had met her ladyship before.

Lady Brooke received them most graciously, and begged they would sit near her, and exerted herself to please them in her most agreeable manner ; when, as if merely by way of something to say, she inquired whether Lady Elizabeth was an only child, or whether Lady Sandford was, like herself, blest with several children.

Lady Sandford gave a slight sketch of her family ; saying, that her eldest son was then at college, but that she expected to see him in town in a few days, and she hoped she would be allowed to introduce him to her ladyship. The Dowager Countess expressed great pleasure, and then moved on to speak to some one else. Even Lady Elizabeth did not find anything

in Lady Brooke's manner to object to, but was rather prepossessed in her favour; yet seeing Mr. Irby coming towards her, she determined to make some inquiries about her new acquaintance. His countenance lightened up as he approached her, and shaking hands with her, he said, "You must allow me the privilege of an old friend: you are so like your father, it really does my old eyes good to look at you."

He sat down near Lady Elizabeth, whilst her mother went to speak to Lady Julia Read, and the conversation turned upon Lady Brooke. He began by inquiring what impression she had formed of her ladyship; and with perfect candour she told him that she had been much pleased with her manner, but that she could not remember what she had heard about her: but whatever it was, it had left a disagreeable impression. Mr. Irby smiled, and said he thought he could explain this; and immediately proceeded to say—that Lady Brooke had been born under the sunny sky of Italy; that her father was an Englishman of rank; and that she had lived at Naples till she was seventeen, when her father removed with all his family to Paris. That was the

first year his exquisitely beautiful daughter had been seen in public, for her life hitherto had been most secluded. Soon the whole *beau monde* of Paris were at her feet, and before many months had passed she had become the bride of the much-envied Lord Brooke. Her figure was tall and commanding, her manner the most winning and fascinating : her own family idolized her. She had happily married one fully her equal in all qualities both of person and mind : universally was it agreed that a finer couple had never been seen ; and from their affability and kindness of manner, they were deservedly most popular. Six lovely daughters, and as many sons, were the fruit of this marriage : and till the eldest of these girls had attained a marriageable age, no one had ever breathed one ill-natured word against Lady Brooke : but no sooner was this the case than a great change came over her. No young men that were not the eldest sons of peers were allowed to dance with her daughters ; no one who had not a title tacked to his name was allowed to speak to them : those friends who had been kind to them in the country, and had known them all their lives, were now forgotten.

Lord Brooke died when his eldest son was only fifteen, and left his widow unlimited control over everything. Fortunately for the two eldest daughters, the two young men who were chosen for them by their mother proved good, attentive, and kind husbands. The girls were superbly handsome, so that they were not very difficult to dispose of in the *London market*: but the strange thing was, that, though so many young men professed their abhorrence of this practice of forcing young girls to marry those who were chosen by their mothers, yet they allowed themselves to be so worked upon by a little flattery as to be caught themselves.

Most of these sisters were dark; but one, Lady Emma, was very fair, with large blue eyes and light hair. Her affections, at a very early age, were bestowed on one worthy of her in every respect, of good family, but not rich; and her mother would not hear of it. Four years afterwards, the unhappy girl was worked upon by her mother's entreaties, and constrained to marry a Lord Drury; a man of notoriously bad character and of violent temper, who had been living in Paris in the most disreputable manner. Such was the person

that Lady Brooke made choice of for her daughter ; who, alas ! knew nothing of his character. She met him frequently at her mother's house ; she thought him agreeable, and decidedly good-looking : he was heir to a dukedom : and that in her mother's mind covered a multitude of sins. The poor girl married him ; and at the end of one short year it would have been difficult to have recognised in the pale, emaciated Lady Drury, the bright, sunny Lady Emma Baker, who had charmed and delighted every one with her cheerfulness. Another sister married a marquis, who soon after went out of his mind. And yet, however marvellous it may appear, in spite of all this, Lady Brooke really loved her children : yes, she tenderly loved them : but she had been brought up with the idea that marriage was only a stepping-stone to rank and titles ; and when she one day saw all her daughters married to men of the highest rank, she mentally exclaimed that she had nothing left to wish for. Some of them were happy : but how young men can so easily be taken in as to marry any girl a parent likes to force upon them is, to say the least, "*tres extraordinaire.*" It is no proof of that superior sense

and refined intellect, which is so much the boast of the young men of the present day.

Elizabeth felt very much interested in this little account that Mr. Irby gave her of Lady Brooke; and though she now despised her character, as that of a match-making old woman, she could not help tacitly acknowledging, as she wished her good-night, that her manner was most fascinating, and that had she been a young man, she should have been quite captivated by her. If such was the case with regard to the mother, there certainly was more excuse when the lovely daughters were the parties concerned. Elizabeth returned home on the whole much pleased with her party: or rather, if the truth be told, with the only two persons with whom she had had some conversation.

CHAPTER III.

THAT evening Elizabeth's thoughts turned much upon these poor girls who had been persuaded to marry whoever their mother thought suitable, without consulting in the least their own inclinations. She felt grateful that her mother had no such ideas, and had not forced her to give her hand to an old suitor the winter before, although an earl's coronet was his right. She was again much grieved the following morning at not receiving any letter from her brother; however, she wrote to him to entreat that—even if he had cause to be angry with her, which she felt conscious was not the case—he would send her one line. She did not mention Catherine Selby: she thought it better not. Perhaps, this was the first letter Sandford had ever received from her without Catherine being mentioned: his eye

ran quickly over the paper to discover if there was any mention made of Catherine ; and he felt vexed and disappointed when he found that her name was entirely omitted. He did not reflect how cruelly he had behaved ; how little he was justified in expecting that Elizabeth could persist in endeavouring to convince him of his fault, when he did not even answer her kind letters. He flung himself into a chair, and wrote a few lines ;—said he was well, and sealed the letter : but opened it again, and said in the cover, “ You do not mention your friend Catherine ;” and then, as if afraid he had done too much, scratched it out, sealed it again, and then despatched it to the post immediately. These few lines conveyed more knowledge of his real sentiments to Elizabeth, than a whole volume of letters would have done : they clearly showed that *she* was not forgotten. The whole affair was still a mystery ; and she feared greatly that Mr. Hawkins was at the bottom of it.

Lady Julia Read called in the afternoon, and invited the Sandfords to take a drive with her ; and in the course of the following day, Lady Brooke also called. Lady Sandford felt much gratified by this, and begged Lady Julia

would go with her and return the visit : she was only too happy ; and day after day there was some pretext or other found for Lady Julia to spend the greater part of each afternoon with Lady Sandford. Elizabeth's dislike to her increased very much when she discovered what a violent, ill-tempered woman Lady Julia was ; who from her sudden starts and fits of absence, she was convinced was at times not quite herself. However, Lady Sandford perceived none of these singularities, and daily found her more agreeable and pleasing. Whenever Elizabeth was not present, Lady Julia urged the great importance it would be to Lord Sandford to make a suitable match, and the expediency of his marrying some one who was possessed not only of rank but of fortune ; and she never failed to cry down what she called a *mesalliance* with any one beneath himself. She dwelt on the advantage it would be to the young Lord that Lady Sandford had taken a house in town for the season ; for that in the country young noblemen are scarce, and are courted by the country belles : but, of course, her ladyship was the last person to wish that her son, of such high rank and talents, should marry a girl of whom nobody knows anything.

Lady Sandford felt her cheek burn at Lady Julia's observation ; for she still looked upon her son as positively engaged to Miss Selby : she began to regret that she had ever allowed that engagement to take place ; and several objections occurred to her, which were not likely to be lessened by listening to Lady Julia Read.

At another party given by Lady Julia, the Sandfords again met Lady Brooke : who this time was accompanied by her granddaughter, Lady Rachel Hunt. Lady Julia had impressed on Lady Sandford's mind, as they drove round the park, that Lady Rachel was a charming girl, highly connected, and very well off. The weak mother sighed, as she reflected how exactly she would have suited her son, had he not foolishly engaged himself to Miss Selby : but she again recollected that there was some slight disagreement between them, which she hoped might end in a final rupture. Lady Sandford had made rapid progress, since the commencement of the season, in all the ways of the fashionable world ; and, consequently, she became every day more heartless. Though all her life Lady Sandford had been reckoned weak and silly, and

open to flattery, yet every one had considered her thoroughly kind-hearted and well-meaning: but, certainly, in this instance she did not show those amiable qualities. Lady Brooke introduced her granddaughter to Lady Sandford and her daughter, who in this instance could not but agree that Lady Rachel Hunt was a remarkably common-looking girl: she was short and thick; rather fair,—at least her hair, which she wore in very long ringlets, was extremely light,—but altogether her face and neck were of a sallow complexion: at night, however, it rather lighted up. The principal feature of her face seemed her nose, which appeared to monopolise the whole of her physiognomy. Her eyes were fine, soft, and grey, fringed with very long lashes; and she was most beautifully dressed: which certainly so much improves personal appearance as to make many a plain girl seem almost good-looking. But it was the *tout ensemble* which looked so common; so much the reverse of *distingué*, and so unlike a gentlewoman of fashion. Her manners were not much more promising than her appearance: she seemed excessively shy and reserved; and altogether, Lady Elizabeth was not much smitten with her. She re-

marked this to her mother, who quite agreed as far as personal charms were concerned ; but had no doubt that when they had become better acquainted with Lady Rachel, would be found very agreeable : besides, she had thirty thousand pounds of her own, payable on the day of her marriage. As Lady Sandford made this remark she gave a sigh, which did not escape the quick ears of her daughter ; who asked her why she did so. Lady Sandford tried to evade the question by seeming occupied with what was passing round her ; so much so that her affectionate child urged it no more : but that brief conversation revealed to Lady Elizabeth that she alone remained true to her first friend—that she alone wished for her brother's marriage with Catherine. She had seen with great vexation her mother's adoption of Lady Julia Read's opinions and ideas, and implicit deference to her and to Miss Rabbit ; and she felt perfectly certain that they were both determined to leave no stone unturned in order to make Lady Sandford declare publicly that her son's engagement with Catherine was quite broken off. It required the putting in practice, in good earnest, of that resignation to the Divine will which she had been early

taught by her kind friend Mr. Selby. It required all her efforts to restrain her naturally rather warm and impetuous heart, to prevent her revealing at once to Miss Rabbit the discovery she had made, and that she saw through all her designs: for it was quite evident what this artful woman was aiming at. A little reflection, however, convinced her but too plainly how utterly useless such an *exposé* would be: besides that, by this exposure of Miss Rabbit, she would cast a reflection upon her own mother; she dismissed, therefore, this idea, feeling disgusted with herself for having entertained it even for one moment. While she was thus perplexed and annoyed, her mother had recounted to Miss Rabbit all the circumstances relating to the heiress who had been introduced to her: Lady Sandford lamented that her son had not been present, for she felt sure he would at once have made up his mind to throw over Miss Selby; as the thirty thousand pounds would enable him to furnish and restore Harden Hall, and afterwards to live there comfortably.

“And why in the world will you always bring up Miss Selby?” replied Miss Rabbit, in a tone of insolent familiarity, which she

had adopted when alone with Lady Sandford; “ have I not told you a hundred and fifty times, that Lord Sandford has broken off his engagement with Miss Selby?” Her ladyship shook her head incredulously, and Miss Rabbit continued, “ Do you think that your son is really such a born idiot, that he cannot see the superiority of Lady Rachel with thirty thousand pounds to Miss Selby with not many more pence? As to her being frightful and stupid, that can’t be helped, and he must make the best of it; but your ladyship will mar the whole scheme if you are continually alluding to Miss Selby: that was a silly country flirtation, and as such ought not now to be mentioned in town. As for old Mr. Selby, he certainly would have played his cards well, if he could have contrived to have married his ward to his daughter; but it will not do.”

Upon this, although it is scarcely credible, Lady Sandford joined in the abuse both of Mr. and Mrs. Selby, in every particular; quite forgetting, that if it had not been for their kindness and exertions, neither she nor her son could ever have kept their place in society. But suddenly stopping herself in the midst of her harangue, she said to Miss Rabbit,—“ You

have been very wrong, and have made me equally so, in abusing these kind and excellent people: they have watched over my children as if they had been their own, and I can never forget that it was owing to them that I and my dear husband first met: indeed, one of his greatest pleasures was the having Mr. Selby constantly near him. But at the same time I must confess, that I heartily wish they had not got such a charming daughter: she is too pretty, too winning a great deal; and I more than fear, that she will end by being *my daughter.*" Lady Sandford forgot (the memory of many people fail them just at the right moment) that not many months had elapsed since she had said, that nothing would give her greater pleasure than to salute Catherine as her son's bride, and that it was a match she particularly wished for. So much for the sincerity and professions of either men or women. But it is now time to turn to our hero, and as such he must be honoured with a new chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD SANDFORD had gradually worked himself up into a state of supreme wretchedness. He was sensible how ill he was behaving, and by what he was himself suffering could well conceive what the torments of mind were that poor Catherine was enduring. But a false sense of shame prevented him following the only straightforward and honourable course that he could have pursued ; which would have been to have sought an explanation with Miss Selby, and obtain her forgiveness. This Mr. Hawkins persuaded him, would be very degrading ; and he made his dupe fairly believe that the lady was the offending person, and that the offer of a reconciliation should originate with her : in short, he tried to prove that she had jilted him. But there were moments when her pure and bright eyes seemed fixed upon Sandford ; as if to read his very soul.

He tried to escape from their influence, but like the eyes of a fine portrait, turn which way he might, they still beamed upon him. His letters to Elizabeth were on indifferent subjects, and she answered them in the same style: she was too much wounded to think of mentioning Catherine. It was nearly two months since he had heard from Miss Selby, and he wished to consult Mr. Selby on his affairs: but how was this possible, after his late conduct to his daughter? How could he expect further advice or kindness from one he had so deeply injured? All his letters on business remained unanswered. Lord Sandford inherited his mother's failing of dependence on others; and when another more urgent letter reached him from the steward, he, for want of a better counsellor, and in an evil hour for himself, called in the assistance of Mr. Hawkins. Overjoyed at being consulted, and at the opening this gave him of becoming acquainted with some private details, Hawkins obeyed the summons; at the same time professing perfect ignorance on all such matters: however, "*to give the devil his due,*" he had a clear head for business, and in this solitary instance his advice was good.

The Cambridge term was nearly ended ; and in another week Lord Sandford had bid adieu to his college, and was hastening to London ; not a little rejoiced at the change, and trusting that the excitement of travelling would deaden thought. His steward had informed him that the property was not very thriving, and that in the autumn, when he came of age, he would find the fortune he would inherit would be but small for a peer. This he tried to impress on his own mind as an excuse for his behaviour to Catherine : but he was too *young* to succeed in persuading himself of this, and he reached town with a desponding heart.

Notwithstanding all her vexation, Elizabeth received her brother with open arms, and his mother was rejoiced to see her first-born son again ; attributing his pale looks to study at night. But after the first bustle of his arrival, there was a restraint, a *je ne sais quoi*, which gave a *gène* to all the party. Elizabeth's thoughts were carried back to when he left them last : sorrowful, indeed, but oppressed with a far different sorrow from that which oppressed her now ; and she could not but remember that *she* whose soul was wrapped up in his

was absent—neglected : yet, she clearly saw, she was not forgotten ! She seized the opportunity, while the fond mother and son were engrossed in conversation, to leave the room and scribble a few lines to Catherine, to tell of Sandford's arrival. That whole evening he appeared studiously to avoid a *tête-à-tête* with Elizabeth : when she spoke, he coloured. This state of things distressed her exceedingly : for some days it continued, and she had not yet been alone with him one minute : he never entered her room as formerly. A chill seemed to have passed over him, leaving him cold and indifferent. Miss Rabbit's society he appeared to enjoy, and it was only when in conversation with her that he became more cheerful and like himself.

A few days after his arrival, an invitation was received from Lady Brooke, inviting the two ladies to dine with her, and expressing a hope that Lord Sandford would accompany his mother, though she had not yet the pleasure of knowing him. Lady Sandford was delighted ; and Miss Rabbit, who daily saw her influence increase over Lord Sandford, urged his mother to accept it for him. She perceived that at present there was little fear of his fall-

ing in love with Lady Rachel, or Lady Anybody ; so she felt easy on that point.

It was on the afternoon of this dinner party that Lady Elizabeth determined to make a strong effort to obtain her brother's confidence. She had been engaged with her pencil, but the large scalding tears she could no longer restrain fell from her eyes, and spoiled the fair cherub she had so skilfully sketched. Her brother stood gazing attentively at her, and felt deeply moved at her silent distress. As usual, Miss Rabbit was in the room, trying what she could discover from the conversation of others. No sooner did Sandford perceive that his sister was deeply vexed about something, than he quickly approached her and exclaimed, " My dearest sister, do let me say a few words to you ;" and hastily rising, they left the room together.

No sooner was the door closed than Elizabeth threw herself into his arms, and burst into a flood of tears : the deep grief which had been confined to her own bosom now broke forth ; and it appeared as if the flood-gates, once opened, all power to stop them was gone. In the tenderest manner her brother sought to calm, to soothe her, and entreated her to

lay all her griefs before him. At length, in sentences broken with tears and sobs, she told him of her desolation—her sorrow at his silence—at his cruel neglect of her; and inquired what she had done to make him so cold and reserved to one who a short time before had possessed his full confidence.

With quick and hurried steps he paced up and down the room as she uttered these words: his conscience whispered that he had indeed treated her cruelly; and the recollection that there was another equally amiable girl in still deeper distress, and that he was the cause of all this misery, drove him distracted. He knew not how to answer Elizabeth: he could not vindicate himself in the slightest degree; for his heart told him how dishonourably he had acted. He stepped before Elizabeth, and taking hold of her hand, sank down on his knees and implored her forgiveness. She kissed his pale cheek, and pronounced the pardon before almost it was required. She believed, now he was softened towards her, that it was the proper time to make one more effort for Catherine. As she leaned over him, placing her hand on his dark, clustering curls, and saw the soft expression of his eyes, she

felt sure that there must be some misunderstanding: some fatal error alone could have turned his love into indifference. She mentioned the name of Catherine, and the blood rushed to his cheeks, and his hands trembled. She spoke to him of their former love, of their devotion to each other, of Catherine's unalterable affection: he writhed under her words. "And now tell me," she continued, "I beseech you—for the sake of all those that are dear to you, tell me, Sandford—why you have deserted one so worthy of you: Tell me, I beg you, who it is that has influenced you? How can you possibly bring yourself to ruin every hope of our dear friend, and destroy every prospect of happiness that you have so long existed upon? Oh, my brother," she continued, "remember that though your engagement has not been solemnized at the altar, you have often, in the sight of God, pledged yourself to love her for better, for worse. Oh, remember that if men do not look upon your engagement as sacred, in God's sight it is so: it is as binding to you as if you had been actually married. And where can you find one so likely to contribute to your happiness,—one so perfectly amiable, and so charming in every

respect? Dear Sandford, I fear that if you reject, entirely forsake Catherine, she will fade away: her health and strength are rapidly failing her. Oh, Sandford, Sandford, hear me," she continued, with increased vehemence, "let me not lose a brother as well as a sister! Let me not love you less—And yet, can I love you the same, after you have behaved so dis—"

"Stop, stop,—for God's sake, stop! I have pledged myself not to marry Catherine."

"Not to marry Catherine!—that is Mr. Hawkins's doing. Yes, Sandford, I feel it is. And have you read to so little purpose as not to know that a bad oath is not binding?—that having once pledged your affections to Catherine, they are no longer yours to dispose of? And to whom have you given up the direction of your affections?—to Mr. Hawkins and Miss Rabbit! Yes," she continued, with bitterness, "to those two; instead of to that gentle and amiable girl, who was—who is devoted to you. Oh, Sandford," and she threw herself into his arms, "promise me, oh, promise me that you will this very day consider on what a precipice you are standing. Consider, if any one had behaved in such

a way to your sister, what your thoughts of such a man would have been. I can only pray that your eyes may be opened to see your error, Sandford,—that is all that a weak girl can do: but for this one day at least, I entreat you do not have any communication with Mr. Hawkins, and restore to me that share of your confidence which I at one time possessed. You know not to what trials I am exposed. The brightest spot in my existence has been the thought of your love and unalterable affection; and now you wish to deprive me of these. Oh, dear Sandford, come to me;" and she held out her hands to him. Deeply moved, he seized them, and covered them with kisses, and entreated that she would compose herself—that she would forgive his long silence (and what cannot a sister forgive?). He assured her that his affection for her was unaltered and unalterable, and ended by declaring that he was very unhappy. He spoke in a tone of such utter wretchedness that Elizabeth was quite startled. She looked steadily in his face, and inquired whether he would not have better consulted his own happiness if he had kept to his first engagement?—and whether it

would not be wiser even now to renew it?—for she knew perfectly well that he had not written to break it off.

He groaned with despair; and turning towards her, hid his face in his hands and wept bitterly. In broken sentences, he told her that during his illness Mr. Hawkins had nursed him with brotherly kindness; and of the great affection he had shown for him; of his pious mind; of his zealous endeavours to turn him from the vanities of this world to better things: in short, that he had most completely satisfied and convinced him by his unanswerable arguments, that it would be the height of sinfulness and folly to marry Catherine, who appeared so lively and so fond of society. It was with difficulty that Elizabeth could restrain her indignation. “But,” her brother continued, “Hawkins was always most kind and attentive to my wants, managed upon all occasions to find me exactly what I needed, and was most considerate in his attentions to me: but at the same time, I must acknowledge, he was invariably harsh and severe in his opinions of Catherine’s character, although he thought her very charming.” It was with a feeling of the

deepest shame that this weak young man avowed to his sister that he still loved Catherine to distraction, and that he was conscious of his conduct being quite unpardonable.

Notwithstanding this confession, Sandford had not the moral courage either to behave better, or to reject the insidious advice of his friend. He could not bring himself to acknowledge that he had been misled by him, or that he was willing to make any apology. As Elizabeth urged him to do so, he owned that it was the proper and honourable course for him to pursue; that it was even what he wished: but still he could not prevail on himself to do it. He dreaded meeting Mr. Hawkins after this interview, and even begged his sister not to mention it to any one. How should he meet him, if he had written to Catherine to ask her forgiveness? Notwithstanding her sorrow, Elizabeth felt quite angry that her brother should be so despicably weak. Again and again she told him he was inflicting a wound which would embitter the longest days of his first love, his oldest friend and companion. In vain she impressed upon him the folly of preferring the friendship of two crafty intriguing people, who evidently only

sought his friendship to serve their own ends, to that of one who devotedly loved him, and whose every thought and every wish was centered in him. He allowed the justice of her observation, and owned that he still wished to marry Catherine ; but then instantly added, Hawkins has convinced me that I cannot afford to be connected with a pennyless girl, and that I must marry some one who has money.

Elizabeth literally started back with astonishment, and let his hand drop. " If that, my dear brother, is your object," she exclaimed, in a mournful tone ; " if you really intend to marry merely for money, the sooner this painful interview is over the better. Such an idea never entered my mind. Indeed, Sandford, I did not think you capable of blighting all the hopes of Catherine and myself—and I think I may with truth add, all your own—for the sake of money. If such is the case, I have no more to say. Yes, Sandford, I have tried all in my power to make you return to your first love ; and remember, that if in after years experience teaches you that you have thrown away such happiness as but rarely falls to the lot of man, then remember that you have still a sister who,

though she may weep for your sins and sorrows, yet will do all in her power to alleviate your griefs and console you. Yes, this has been the first cause, and I trust may be the last time that I shall ever have to differ from you. But do not let the impression I fancied that I had made upon you, by relating Catherine's affection and sorrow, be obliterated directly. Oh ! let it sink deep into your heart ! Write to her this very day—this very hour—and she will forgive you."

" Impossible !" interrupted Lord Sandford ; " if I cannot forgive myself, is it possible that one whom I have so deeply injured can forgive me ?"

" It is possible,—it is certain," continued Elizabeth. " You know but little of woman's love, if you think that two months' unkindness and neglect can blot out years of love and affection. Catherine, I repeat, will gladly receive your apology ; and instead of feeling depressed, as you now do from a consciousness of having acted dishonourably, you will by degrees regain your self-esteem."

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and a servant announced that Mr. Hawkins waited to see his lordship.

"Tell him his lordship is at present with me, and cannot be interrupted," said Lady Elizabeth.

"No, no!—say I will come in one moment," exclaimed Lord Sandford.

The servant withdrew.

"Oh, why will you see this designing, artful man?" said Elizabeth. "For one day oblige me, and do not admit him. Go to your own room, or stay here: on that table you will find all that is necessary for writing a letter. Write at once to Catherine; I beseech you, Sandford, to do so;" and she fell on her knees at his feet.

Greatly shocked, he attempted to raise her.

"Oh, raise me not!" she cried. "If the words of a stranger have more influence than the prayers and entreaties of a sister, oh, let me die here, and never again awake to the feeling of unutterable misery, that he whom I thought so perfect, so blameless, should have disappointed me so bitterly as you have done."

Her fast falling tears prevented her from saying more. Lord Sandford lifted her to the sofa, kissed her pale cheeks, and went to the door. Again and again he returned and kissed her, and then he rushed away. But

not to write to Catherine: no,—after a hard struggle between his inclination and his fear of Mr. Hawkins, the latter conquered; and after waiting in his room till all traces of emotion had passed, and his voice resumed its calmness, Sandford descended to the drawing-room, where he found Mr. Hawkins and Miss Rabbit in an apparently most interesting conversation, which they abruptly concluded as he entered the room.

CHAPTER V.

SOME hours after the interview we have described, Lady Sandford found herself, with her son and daughter, in a splendid saloon in Lady Brooke's large house in Hill Street. It was crowded with people; yet the moment their name was announced, Lady Brooke went to the door to receive them: Lady Rachel Hunt was leaning on her arm, and Lord Sandford was instantly presented to her. Perceiving some of his friends, he went to the other side of the room to join them. One by one, in the course of that evening, Lady Brooke introduced him to all her titled sons-in-law, who paid the young earl great attention, and gave him a *carte blanche* to go to their houses when he pleased.

Lady Rachel Hunt's father was an extraordinary-looking man,—tall, *gauche*, with a large turned-up nose, a harsh voice, and bad manners: he had likewise the reputation of

being ill-tempered ; and this, together with his uncouth appearance, did not, in general, cause his acquaintance to be much sought after. Lord Sandford did not certainly feel prepossessed in his favour. Dancing soon commenced, and Elizabeth was led off to join the dancers. She passed near her brother, and smiled at him as she heard him discussing the relative merits of Norman style, and florid Gothic style of architecture. He gaily returned her smile ; and his friend eagerly inquired who that charming-looking girl was. He simply replied, his sister,—and nothing more passed on the subject.

Lady Brooke's quick eye soon detected Sandford amongst the lookers-on ; and approaching him, playfully shook her fan at him, saying, " You are too young to stand still ; let me procure you a partner ;" and placing her arm in his, she led him away. Seemingly by accident, they passed a sofa on which Lady Rachel was sitting.

" Why, my love, you not dancing !" exclaimed Lady Brooke, " how is that ? "

She replied, " I have not been asked."

" Well," continued her grandmother, " we are in search of a partner for Lord Sandford,

and when," she continued, smiling at him, "he is disposed of, I will return to you."

Feeling himself obliged to come forward, Lord Sandford immediately engaged Lady Rachel for the next dance, and they moved off together.

"That will do very well," said the match-making old lady to herself. "That will do admirably;" and passed on to other circles.

Lord Sandford had not danced since those winter balls when he was so happy with Miss Selby; and he could not but be painfully alive to the difference between his former partner and his present one. He tried hard to lead her into conversation; but Lady Rachel was so dull, so stupid and shy, so devoid of animation,—besides being much alarmed at her father, who stood exactly behind her—that she was but a sorry kind of partner; so, after trying all subjects to elicit some remarks beyond *Yes*, or *No*, he gave up the attempt, and left her to her own reflections. He had a particular dislike to such still life: altogether he was put out, and was not a little rejoiced when the quadrille was over; and as he led Lady Rachel back to her seat, he congratulated himself that his task was happily over for that evening.

Just as she was sitting down, Lady Brooke met him, and asked him to take charge of his partner into the music-room, as her father was there waiting for her. There was no help for it; so, with a smile, he bowed assent to her ladyship's wishes: but the moment he had deposited the *lively* daughter with her *kind* father, he made his bow, and withdrew.

More than once that evening had he been asked by his young friends when his marriage was to take place, and each time had he denied the truth of the report: though as he did so he felt as if he was signing his death-warrant. But the truth is, that that very evening, after Elizabeth left him, Mr. Hawkins had appeared with several petitions,—one from the poor, another for schools, another for churches; and insinuated so much about the increased responsibility that would devolve upon him on his coming of age, and of the economy necessary,—that he had persuaded Sandford that it would be madness to think of marrying at present. But even at the moment that he thus negatived his marriage, and determined to break his most solemn promises, his heart told him that he was behaving shamefully to Catherine—that he was casting

her off for ever: he strove to stifle the recollection by gaiety, and by mixing constantly in society.

The day following Lady Brooke's *soirée* he received many invitations from different members of her family to balls and concerts. His sister saw directly what they were aiming at; but knowing how unheeded were all persuasions, she left him to his fate, and with silent sorrow saw that, day after day, he was becoming more intimate with the family.

Some days afterwards, Lady Elizabeth received a note from Catherine, saying that she was in town, at Mr. Lyndsay's, and would like much to see her. She had been there three days, but could not before make up her mind to acquaint her friend. Immediately ordering the carriage, Lady Elizabeth repaired to Grosvenor Street, and was fortunate enough to find Catherine alone, and disengaged. She was sitting in that small chamber, furnished with oak, which our readers may remember had so charmed her on her arrival in town that time last year. Now the furniture was much changed, and the bright, pink hangings no longer as fresh as they had been. But nothing was so changed as Catherine herself:

she had become so thin, so pale. She threw herself into Elizabeth's arms, and the two friends wept together.

"Is there any hope for *me*?" cried Catherine.

Elizabeth mournfully shook her head. Catherine supported herself wonderfully: she sat calmly down, and after a few moments' painful silence attempted to speak. Her words were at first almost unintelligible; but as she proceeded she gained courage, and begged Elizabeth to tell her all she knew of *Lord* Sandford. The word *Lord* struck harshly on Elizabeth's ears; it was so different from the "dearest Sandford" she had lately been accustomed to hear from Catherine. Tenderly she told her all she knew of her brother: which, in fact, amounted to very little: she described her interview with him.

Catherine's eyes flashed fire, as she exclaimed, "Oh, Elizabeth, never do so again. Do not go on your knees for me! No. I thank you from my heart: but I am not to be won unsought!" and the indignant feeling brought back that bloom to her cheek which had faded during the last few months. Over and over again did she gratefully thank

Elizabeth ; but exhorted her never to mention her name again to him. “ If,” and her voice trembled, in spite of her most strenuous efforts to calm all emotion,—“ if he mentions me, let him know the wreck he has wrought ;” and she removed her scarf to show how emaciated she had become. Elizabeth was inexpressibly shocked : she found it difficult to continue to love one who had so ill-used this gentle uncomplaining creature. She stayed many hours with her, and tried to interest her in indifferent subjects ; and Catherine felt grateful and gratified. She told Elizabeth that London was the last place she had wished to come to ; but that her grandmother had been so urgent she could not refuse ; that she was fully aware of Elizabeth’s deep affection for her, and therefore did not hesitate to entreat her to visit her frequently :—with many promises of doing so, the friends parted.

From the little Catherine had heard, she believed that Sandford still loved her, but that he had not sufficient firmness to stand to his engagement against his mother’s entreaties, and Miss Rabbit’s and Mr. Hawkins’s manoeuvres. She was not far from wrong in this conjecture ; it was his want of firmness that had

caused her so much suffering : but this thought did not tend to diminish her love for him, and the idea that he was unhappy added ten-fold to her misery. She was not left long to indulge in melancholy : other visitors came crowding in ; friends, who at any other time she would have rejoiced to see, now put her to the rack by inquiring whether her marriage with Lord Sandford was publicly announced ?—“ if the report was true ? ” and a host of similar questions ; to all which our poor heroine was obliged to reply that there was no truth in the report—that she was not going to marry Lord Sandford—and to laugh at the absurdity of such reports in general ; while her aching heart was bursting, with having to deny that which some months before was considered by herself and all her family as a settled thing. Her grandmother was deeply grieved for her : day after day people came to congratulate her upon her happy prospects, and day after day was Catherine obliged to array herself in smiles to deny the cruel question. Nothing that she could say could, however, convince her young friends of her sincerity. They all reiterated, that the more she denied it the more assuredly it

would take place ; and Elizabeth being constantly with her gave a colour to the report : particularly as all the world knew that Mr. Selby had been Lord Sandford's guardian, and that both families lived in the greatest intimacy.

It was after passing an afternoon of a more than usual harassing nature that Catherine returned to her chamber, and falling on her knees poured out the bitterness of her grief and sorrow at the throne of mercy. Scarcely had she risen when the gentle knock of Elizabeth was heard, who, throwing her arms round Catherine's neck, mingled her tears with those of her broken-hearted friend. She was shocked to see her so pale and worn : these daily trials were beginning to tell upon her constitution ; her thinness increased, and she appeared now nearly exhausted.

There are certain persons whose peculiar vocation appears to be that of soothing and comforting others ; it was in this point of view that the beauty of Elizabeth's character was conspicuously displayed. She had been with her mother that day to a gay *déjeuner*, and thence she hastened to her early friend, the first moment she was at liberty, to cheer and

console her. She did not hold out hopes, of what she herself considered hopeless ; she tried to interest Catherine about other subjects : not at all, however, shrinking from the one she knew must be the dearest to Catherine. At her return home she reproached her brother with his neglect and cruel conduct : she painted in vivid colours Catherine's palor and illness, and all her sufferings. She reproached him with his breach of faith. He was miserable, and promised to see Catherine the following day. He urged his poverty as the sole reason for breaking his engagement. Elizabeth replied that Catherine scarcely ever stirred out of a morning for fear of meeting him ; in evening gaieties, however, she was obliged to mingle, but with her heart oppressed with its own bitter sorrow : she joined in the mirth of others, simply because it is not thought *comme il faut* for a girl still to care for one who has gained her tenderest affections, and then deserts her ! Cruel custom !

Nothing could be more beautiful than Catherine's resignation : she was always cheerful when with her grand-parents ; for the idea that they were wretched about her caused her to exert herself to the utmost. Their kind, considerate sympathy touched her much ;

it was without parade, more felt than seen. In the London crowd this fair girl might have passed as one apparently recovering from a long illness: still pale and delicate, though cheerful and agreeable. It was Elizabeth who was the most struck with the change in her manner. She had been so gay and lively—so joyous in her first love; now it was the quiet staid manner of a woman of thirty: that first sprightliness of youth was gone. She laughed at other's jokes, and she entered into their pleasures; but it was with an effort to herself. Few that saw her gaily dressed, dancing or singing, would imagine that an hour afterwards she would be stretched upon the bed, worn out and exhausted both in body and mind. No, not even her fond mother could tell the silent agony she felt. At night, her pale cheek was moistened with floods of tears; silently and slowly they coursed each other,—not a sob was heard: it was that grief which no mortal eye could ever see, no mortal sympathy heal. Her first dream of hope and love was blighted; her belief that happiness could be found in this world was fled; her heart was *widowed* in the truest sense of the word. And yet cold custom forbade her to

weep, or to show in any way that she grieved. Had she been married but one short day, all marks of sorrow, all the sympathy of friends, would have been hers: now she must mourn in secret. She missed, while in London, her mother's and sister's sympathy: they knew every thought; they soothed, while apparently not regarding her.

Elizabeth—kind, good Elizabeth—strove to fill their places; but she could only be with her at intervals, and when she left her alone, Catherine was obliged to resume her cheerfulness. She hated herself for this deception. She who had always been so candid and open, despised herself for this unavoidable deceit. Poor Catherine! Hers is but the bitter fate of many a fair and blooming girl: hers but the tale of many young and lovely ones! Could the cause be searched out why so many young and fair ones drop into a premature grave from decline and consumption in this our island, would it not be found that the illness began by the mind feeding on itself after a bitter disappointment? after the discovery that their warmest affections have been unworthily bestowed?

CHAPTER VI.

FINDING all his endeavours fruitless—finding that Miss Selby would not listen to his suit—her persecutor took a violent aversion to the innocent girl; and Lady Julia Read's former prepossession for the young lady was changed into the most virulent dislike. It was in vain that she heard her cried up by every one as the Queen's favourite maid of honour; in vain every one assured her that she was most amiable and pretty. She detested her very name: she regarded her as the cause of many misfortunes; and exonerated herself from all blame on account of her proceedings with Howell on the plea of urgent necessity: indeed she scrupled not to throw on the innocent Miss Selby the whole blame of that disquiet and uneasiness of mind she experienced. She had invented all sorts of outrageous stories against her, with which she intended to poison Lady Sand-

ford's mind : but the reproof she had received from Lady Elizabeth effectually silenced her for the present. She, however, lost no opportunity of insinuating the advantage it would be to his mother and family if Lord Sandford were to make a good match ; and then she repeated some flattering silly speech she had heard Lady Brooke make about the young earl. Elizabeth saw through all her artifices, and yet could not divine what had given her such unqualified dislike to Catherine. She had never before heard her mentioned but in terms of the warmest admiration, and therefore this violent abuse, lavished on her by Lady Julia upon all occasions, induced Lady Elizabeth to ask her mother whether she thought one so little sparing of her invective toward those with whom she knew they were closely united, was a fit associate for herself and daughters. She spoke of all the kindness Mr. Selby had ever shown them ; of his being their guardian ; and of the great debt of gratitude they owed to him for his care and attention to all their affairs ever since her father's death.

Lady Sandford, as we have before said, was not an ill-natured woman ; but from a feeling of dependence on others, she was apt, from

natural indolence, to resign herself to the guidance of any one that would undertake the onerous charge; and so completely had Lady Julia captivated her by her flattery and obsequiousness that Lady Sandford protested that she was the most amiable of women, and was half angry with her daughter for not liking Lady Julia as much as she did herself. Elizabeth, seeing that she made no impression, gave up the attempt, and prepared, with a heavy heart, to accompany her mother in the carriage. Her walks with Sandford were few and far between; he was entirely taken up with Mr. Hawkins. Elizabeth's kind heart swelled with emotion as she thought of his late neglect of her; but she felt even more for him than for herself;—he appeared so utterly wretched. He had embraced very violent Puseyite notions; was for ever talking of the urgent necessity of alterations in churches and chapels; of the absolute necessity of attending divine service twice a day; of the authority of ecclesiastics; of the sinfulness of their marrying, and especially of the sanctity of the young clergymen of the present day! Elizabeth sighed as he talked thus, and thought if his model of perfection, Mr. Haw-

kins, was a correct specimen of the young men of the nineteenth century, they were charming indeed! The first thing in her gentle creed was *charity*; and this seemed to be quite lost sight of by Mr. Hawkins and the new lights. She could not but call to mind the desolate situation of poor Catherine, and the miscalled pious instigator of her wretchedness; she believed at that moment, Catherine could scarcely feel more wretched than she did herself.

But we must again return to Lady Julia Read. Ever since Lady Sandford's arrival in town, she had been endeavouring to persuade her nephew, that having failed with Miss Selby was no reason he should not succeed with Lady Elizabeth Sandford; but Lady Elizabeth's extreme coldness and distant manner towards her, had effectually prevented anything of the sort: besides which, her nephew could not be persuaded to return to town. The failure of so many plans, and the increasing demand of creditors, added to her natural violence of temper, made it difficult for any one to live with Lady Julia. The only person who could tame her was Howell; a look from whom often quieted her in the

most violent paroxysm of ill-temper. Howell never allowed herself to reflect on any of those dreadful scenes through which she had passed : the recollection would have unnerved her. Sometimes, in spite of all her efforts to banish thought, the image of that sweet child, with his mild expression and engaging manner; and of his gentle mother, rose up before her startled imagination in the stillness of night. She had placed him far out of the reach of all his family. Never could she remain alone for a moment in the dark : the air seemed peopled with living beings, urging her to produce the child,—to acknowledge to the world that he was Mr. Read's lawful son. Oh, fearful were the mental tortures of this misguided and now depraved woman !

One day her fury was excited against Lady Julia, whom she threatened to deliver up to justice. Scarcely were the rash words uttered when Lady Julia fell senseless on the floor, and many hours elapsed before there was any sign of returning life. Loudly did Howell curse her fate ; for at the moment when her fiendish imagination had been dwelling on Lady Julia confined in a madhouse, and herself surrounded by luxuries, she ima-

gined from all appearance that she was dead, or nearly so.

In course of time, however, Lady Julia opened her eyes; but meeting those of Howell, she shuddered, and closed them again. Her husband was at the gambling-house, her nephew no one knew where; and at that moment there appeared every probability that Lady Julia would expire, surrounded only by her domestics. It was otherwise ordained, and towards morning she became conscious of what had passed; and on Howell promising never again to repeat those fearful words, she rose from her bed to indite a letter: but her hand shook so violently it refused to hold the pen. For the whole of that day she was left to the tender mercies of Howell; whose threat, always made use of to extort money, which she feigned was used for the benefit of the child, was that no power should prevent her making use of the certificate, which she now denied having destroyed, to show that Mr. Read was a profligate spendthrift. This threat succeeded, and day after day she obtained all she desired from Lady Julia.

CHAPTER VII.

BUT my readers will become weary of my story; and as the summer, through which they have hitherto accompanied me, is drawing to a close, so must we also think of closing our tale: the leaves beginning to fall, and the flowers to fade, betoken approaching autumn.

The sounds of workmen were heard within the sacred walls of a small edifice, which has been denominated Harden Chapel. Great improvements at a vast cost had been made: three painted glass windows, of beautiful design and colouring, were placed in the chancel, and the whole building had been repaired. The seats were low, and alike for peer and peasant; the rich oak of the pannelling corresponding with the dark beam that supported the ceiling. Mr. Selby had not before seen it; but having been that day engaged in business with Lord Sandford's steward, he after-

wards strolled towards the chapel. It was a lovely evening; the rich red and golden tints of the foliage contrasting finely with their sombre neighbours the pines. Mr. Selby sighed as he approached the chapel. Lord Sandford had often consulted him, as he would have done his father, on all these alterations; looking forward to the delight he should feel in having them completed and approved of by his Catherine. Now, alas! this dream of happiness was over; and in another few weeks he would resign his charge, without exchanging the name of guardian for that of father. He was not apt to give way to useless repinings; but it was impossible not to feel regret: so much was he overcome, that he was almost tempted to return without entering the sacred walls.

Calmer thoughts, much more in unison with the sacred purpose for which this edifice had been raised, succeeded, and he entered the building. He was struck with its beauty. The last time he had been there high irregular pews disfigured it; now all the seats were low and uniform. Mr. Selby expressed astonishment at there being no reading-desk, nor did he approve the omission: but in

stead thereof an eagle was placed in the centre of the church. Again, there was no pulpit, but a smaller eagle near the chancel. He found the old bailiff there, who was lamenting over the innovations in the service that had been introduced ; and explained to him that Mr. Hawkins, the only person who did duty there, knelt on the steps leading to the communion-table ; that he read the prayers with his back to the congregation, and that he used no prayer before the sermon. Mr. Selby sighed on hearing this, as it confirmed what he had been led to expect ; he, therefore, asked the good old servant, on what subject Mr. Hawkins had preached last Sunday.

“ Why, sir, please your honour, I don’t exactly recollect ; the only thing I can bring to mind is, that he said a great deal about the goodness of the young lord, and that we were blest to have him amongst us. This, sir, struck me as rather queer-like, and different from common, as his lordship sat just under the preacher.”

“ Exactly under the preacher, listening to his own praises,” interrupted Mr. Selby ; “ well, I am surprised !”

“ Ay, sir, so was I ; for not being learned,

I thought the meaning of all these low pews and fine windows, which would have kept the parish in bread all the winter, was to prove that we are all equal in church. But, sir, I do not like Mr. Hawkins, and that's the truth. I don't like his look : he is not open ; one never feels sure of him. No, no, I don't fancy him. He has a number of queer notions ; and, sir, he thinks clergymen ought not to marry. Now, I should like to ask him how the poor people would get on without the clergymen's wives and daughters ? But, sir, I beg your pardon, may be I offend."

Mr. Selby assured the honest man he had not ; and after a little more conversation, took his leave. These innovations in the performance of our holy service did not please Mr. Selby. The alterations in the pews he much approved of,—it was what he had done in Torrington Church ; but then he wished the change not to be carried any further. He knew that Lord Sandford was ill able to afford the enormous expense of stained glass windows.

On his return to the Hall he found that Lord Sandford had unexpectedly arrived ; who was the very last person he wished then to meet :

but it could not be avoided ; and as he entered the drawing-room, he beheld the son fondly embracing his mother. The moment Lord Sandford perceived Mr. Selby, his eyes were downcast, his cheeks crimson, and he looked very much like a culprit schoolboy before his master. But Mr. Selby's was a forgiving nature, and even at the moment he could not but admire the extreme softness of his ward's expression : though he knew full well that that softness or pliancy of temper, or by whatever name indecision of character is called, was working his ruin ; and not his alone. The cold manner in which he said,—

“ Lord Sandford, I was not aware that you were expected to-day,” wounded Sandford to the quick. It was so different from the cordial, warm-hearted greeting of former days, that the tears started into his large eyes. He did not seem before to have considered that his behaviour must have effectually closed all intercourse with the Selby family, unless they were sufficiently charitable to forgive and overlook it ; and the thought flashed across him that he might never again be allowed to see Catherine.

Mr. Selby perceived that he was overcome ;

but made no comment. He merely inquired of Lady Sandford if he could be of further use in settling any other business; and on her replying in the negative, rang the bell, and ordered his horse. As he was about to leave the room,—“In another fortnight,” he said, “Lord Sandford, I resign my guardianship; but if during that time I can be of any service to you—if you want any advice—do not hesitate to consult me: for your father’s sake, I would go a hundred miles to serve you. You are entering on the cares of life alone.”

Sandford started at the word alone.

“Yes, alone,” continued Mr. Selby, in a serious tone; “and if you think the experience of a man of threescore worth having, ask for it.” More he did not think himself bound to say; and the door closed after him.

Lord Sandford was utterly wretched. He would have given worlds to have inquired after Catherine; but he felt—yes, he still could feel—that it would be profanation in him to mention her name. He sank back in his chair, overwhelmed with sad thoughts. Never, till that moment, had he fully calculated on the consequences which his deserting her had entailed on himself. Indeed, in the hurry and

bustle of London, he had not given himself time to reflect: now it was different. The last time he had quitted Harden Hall, it had been with reiterated vows that he would return and claim his bride: those vows were broken; and the heart of her who was to have been his bride was well nigh broken also. He had become hateful to himself, and, he plainly saw, not less obnoxious to Mr. Selby. In this he wronged his kind guardian; whose cold manner was assumed more with the hope of reclaiming than alienating him.

At this moment the servant entered, and said his presence was necessary to give some directions about the painting. Gladly he followed the man; thankful to any one who diverted the current of his thoughts ever so little. The house had been undergoing most thorough and complete repair: it had been done by Mr. Selby's wish; who considered the duty of guardian but imperfectly fulfilled, if, on his ward coming of age, he had found his mansion had been neglected, and required great repairs..

The grand saloon was a fine room, papered with a pale blue paper, with a gold and white cornice; the furniture was white and gold to

correspond ; and as Lord Sandford opened the door, it blazed upon him in all its splendour. He felt a youthful pride at being the possessor of such magnificence, and proud also of the seat of his ancestors. It was entirely Mr. Selby's taste ; who during the absence of the family, had superintended the whole. Sandford was convinced that no one could have done it better ; and returning to his study, in the first warmth of his gratitude, he wrote such a note as a year before he would always have written to his guardian. It was cordial and grateful, entreating for his further advice and care : but when he came to conclude the note, he was sorely puzzled to know what to say. At length, with a trembling hand, he wrote his kindest love to Mrs. Selby and her daughters ;—Catherine he could not name—and despatching the note, he felt happier than he had done for many a day. He was almost inclined to envy the note which was destined to find its way into the presence of Catherine. What was it that prevented him from taking it himself? Nothing ; but that his mother, and other evil advisers, had over-persuaded him into the belief that it would be his ruin to marry a portionless girl,

instead of being too thankful that one of such a weak character had been able to gain the affections of one so sensible as well as amiable.

The arrival of the note at the Rectory produced quite a sensation. The family were sitting together in the drawing-room, and before the note was scarcely placed on the table, Catherine saw the direction: a dizziness came over her, her hands trembled, and had not her mother rushed to her assistance, and Susan quickly applied some *eau de Cologne* to her temples, she would have fainted. It was the first time for months that his writing had been seen in that room. Ashamed of such weakness, even before her father and mother, she soon roused herself, and begged her father to read the note to them. He did so; and a smile of satisfaction passed over his brow when he saw how pleased Sandford had been with all the improvements which had been made at Harden Hall.

"And what has been done?—what improvements?" inquired Catherine.

"Oh, my darling child, forgive me: I forgot at the moment that you were not aware of all this. That great alterations and improvements have been going on, both in the house

and chapel, I forbore to tell you, my love ; not knowing how you would be able to bear it."

Catherine's beaming eyes had been fixed on her father's face, and her sanguine heart again beat high with hope, that perhaps even now Sandford had returned to his home and his former love. Cruel was her disappointment ! Bitterly did she feel that all these improvements, which they had so often discussed and finally agreed upon, were now completed, and without her having been aware even that they were commenced—were all finished, and not for her. Taking hold of Susan's arm, she left the room, and retired to her own chamber ; where, with streaming eyes, she besought her heavenly Father to support her, and not to lay more upon her than she was able to bear. The idea that they were only a few miles apart seemed worse to her than when he was far away. It added increased gall to her bitter cup of woe that he was so near ; and yet that she was despised, and forgotten, and neglected, by one who at that very time had promised to come forward and claim her as his bride. It was some little time before she could sufficiently compose herself to join the family

circle ; when her extreme paleness alarmed her mother, who entreated her to retire again, and she would accompany her. She saw the effort was too much for her gentle frame ; she therefore remained with her sweet daughter till she was calm, and more likely to obtain that repose which was so much needed.

From day to day Catherine lived in continual dread of meeting Lord Sandford ; she was afraid of stirring beyond the garden walks : every step she heard approaching the house made her tremble from head to foot ; she dreaded, yet almost wished to see him : she dwelt on his affection for her, on his tenderness to her in former days, till the idea that he was lost to her for ever was more than she could bear. To a stranger, nothing of this was visible : the world at large thought Miss Selby had become very silent, more pale, and not so pretty as she had been, but this was all ; for her manner was equally pleasing, nor did she absent herself from anything that was going on, under the plea of indisposition. For many a year she had looked to this September as the climax of her happiness,—as the month in which she was solemnly to swear to love Sandford, and him only. Her partiality for

autumn had been quite a joke against her with her brother and sister ; who knew pretty well the reason why “the sear and yellow leaf” was preferred to the freshness of spring. This year the month of September had been more than usually fine ; the splendours of the harvest were succeeded by a fortnight of the hottest weather ; and the delighted villagers might be still seen gleaning in the noon-day heat, thankful for this opportunity of increasing their little store. It was such an autumn as lovers of the picturesque must always delight in ; and time had been when Catherine’s clever pencil would have rivalled its most gorgeous tints : but now she could not feel any interest in her painting. During the summer she had forced herself to sketch ; now, working was her only amusement : *that* required no thought, no attention ; and as her hand mechanically plied the needle, her imagination might roam unfettered through all the various scenes of her past life. “September,” she said, with a sweet smile, “will soon be past, and I shall then be better : I shall feel less nervous,—more resigned, I trust, to what apparently cannot be avoided.” Thus she reasoned, and thus tried to calm herself. Alas ! her utmost efforts were needed to do so.

CHAPTER VIII.

GREAT rejoicings were to take place on the day Lord Sandford attained his majority : the tenants were to be plentifully regaled with good old English cheer ; the labourers were to be also feasted, and to the neighbourhood a grand ball was to be given : the cards of invitation were already issued. Catherine read the invitation without changing countenance : it was written by Lady Sandford, asking the whole family, and saying if they did not go, she should feel much hurt. From the intimacy which had always subsisted between them, she hoped even Tiny might be allowed to go. For some days Catherine had been dreading this invitation, and pondering in her own mind whether it were possible for her to avoid attending the ball. She was fearful that her strength would fail her ; yet at the

same time she had rather a wish to go, in order once again to see Sandford, and to hear his voice.

A few days before the ball, Catherine when alone with Susan, asked her if she thought it was absolutely necessary that she should go to the Harden ball. In the tenderest manner Susan replied, that she thought it was; for no doubt but that every one would be ready to say that she had been disappointed in not catching the young Earl, and therefore would not go to his ball: but she added, as she pressed her lips against Catherine's pale cheek, down which the scalding tears were fast falling, if it be too much for you, dearest, you shall remain at home. I have no patience with Sandford, he has behaved so shamefully. One thing, however, you may depend upon, that he will never be happy again!"

"If I thought so, that would be the greatest hinderance to my going," returned Catherine. "No, Susan, I have loved Sandford far too deeply, ever to wish any ill to befall him. He has been all in all to me."

"And most cruelly has he used you," interrupted Susan. "Yet, dearest sister, if you can bear the exertion, go with us to the ball;

your absence would excite disagreeable remarks, which it might be difficult to answer. Be assured, you had better go," and she kissed her sister's pale cheek, who even then could smile on one so fair, so amiable.

They left the garden seat, on which this little conversation had taken place, and wandered forth through the fields. The air seemed to revive Catherine, and Susan assured her that though one had proved false, and his love hollow, yet there were many left of whose affection she could not doubt, and who would do their utmost to soothe and console her. Catherine was grateful to her sister, but felt that the love which is centered on one object is very different from that which even the most attached sister can feel.

The day which had formerly been so much wished for by the inhabitants of the Rectory, was now equally dreaded by all the elders of the family. The day of Lord Sandford's coming of age was arrived. The sun shone brightly into Catherine's room at an early hour : her eyes had not been closed once that night in sleep ; she rose from her bed feverish and unrefreshed. Her first act was to kneel down and implore blessings on Sandford's head ; that he might be blessed with health and happiness.

On opening her window, the fresh morning air cooled her burning brow ; and then knowing that she had much to undergo on that day, she threw herself on her bed and endeavoured to obtain a little repose. Softer emotions came over her, and her worn-out frame was at length refreshed with sleep.

When she again awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, and she felt half annoyed that she had rested so well. But again when she reflected how much she had felt the want of sleep, she was thankful that she had not been disturbed. When she descended to the breakfast room, her mother was struck with her looking much more like herself than she had seen her for a long time. As the day wore away, her nervousness increased, the slight tinge of carnation fled from her cheek, and she appeared painfully abstracted. One of the younger ones inquired of her, why she disliked so much going to the ball ?

“ Oh ! ” she replied quickly, “ we shall enjoy it very much, and I hope you will dance a great deal, little man. If you are in want of a partner come to me ; ” and kissing his rosy cheek, she hastily left the room.

The two sisters were to be dressed exactly

alike, and Catherine left the whole charge of her toilette to Susan, merely stipulating that it must be simple, and that she would wear natural flowers in her hair ; and Susan's good taste was certainly displayed in the wreath she formed for her sister. It was myrtle and red geranium entwined together ; and anything more becoming for Catherine's dark hair could not have been selected. Notwithstanding her sorrow for Catherine, Susan could not help in the joyousness of her heart, feeling much pleasure at the thoughts of the ball ; and as she put the finishing touch to her rich curls, smiled complacently enough at her laughing face. Catherine fully entered into all Susan's pleasure, and was much more solicitous about her than about herself.

On account of many children being asked, the party was to assemble early, and eight o'clock saw all the Selby family off on their way to Harden Hall. Catherine had stipulated that she should go with her mother in the chariot, the others following in the family-coach with their father. She did not speak for some time after they were in the carriage. At length Mrs. Selby, taking her daughter's hand in hers, thanked her for the effort she

had made, for though most painful at the time, it would be far better afterwards. A kind look was all the answer that Catherine dared give ; had she attempted to speak, her tears would instantly have flowed. Her fond mother knew all she would say, from that expressive look, and again pressed her hand. She said she need hardly add, that if Sandford asked her to dance with him she had better do so. Catherine started : “ Yes, my love, you had really better, the effort will be great, and I trust you may be spared making it : but in the opinion of the world you were engaged, and all eyes, therefore, will be upon you ; let your manner, therefore, take its cue from his. Let it not be said, you accepted him, and afterwards jilted him : for the blame is always on these occasions thrown on the lady.”

Catherine thanked her sweet mother : she saw she was right, but inwardly prayed he might not ask her.

They now approached Harden Hall, from which issued strains of music, of laughter, and merriment. Catherine felt as if at that moment she would willingly have dropped down and sunk into her grave. The carriage stopped—they were in the hall—and before Cathe-

rine scarcely knew where she was, Elizabeth's maid was assisting her in taking off her shawl. Hurriedly murmuring her thanks, she seized hold of her mother's arm to go to the saloon. Scarcely had they reached the door when the quadrille ceased; and as they entered Lord Sandford was passing with one of his cousins. He sprang forward, shook hands with Mrs. Selby, thanked her for coming, and after quickly shaking hands with Catherine hurried away.

They had met, and Catherine felt paralysed —she could scarcely support herself. His eyes, as they turned upon her, had that same expression of love, as in former days would have always met her gaze. But he was gone. Catherine, with a paler cheek than before, but erect figure and steady step, moved on with her mother to a group of ladies, where they saw Lady Sandford standing. As they crossed the room they were joined by Lady Elizabeth, who seized hold of Catherine, and showed more real kindness by drawing off attention from her, than a volume of words would have done. Catherine FELT that Sandford had again entered the room; yes, though she saw him not she *felt* he was there; and assuming

an expression of as much *hauteur* as she could, she turned round and saw him laughing with his cousin. Two minutes afterwards she was asked to dance, and Elizabeth had only time to whisper, “Dance everything, dearest; it is better that you should.” When the musicians struck up a lively waltz the quick movement pleased her: it deadened her thoughts. Her partner was an excellent dancer, and she enjoyed, yes, positively enjoyed, the whirl of that halfhour. She gave herself up to the excitement of the scene; and the light, cheerful laugh, peculiar to her in happy days, was again heard. When they at length stopped in the corner of the room, she felt her cheek was crimson, as she perceived Lord Sandford’s eye upon her: but, apparently, she noticed him not, and was all attention to her rattling partner; and as she threw back her head, looked that same bright Catherine Selby who had so charmed all eyes at the winter balls. No sooner was this dance ended, than she was engaged for another; and so on through the whole evening.

Catherine soon saw that Sandford was watching her every movement: her eye often sought his, and always found his resting

on her. Still the evening was wearing away, and he had not spoken to her : even the slight hope that she had clung to on perceiving how he watched her every action, was fled, and she felt more wretched than ever. She saw that the momept Lord Sandford perceived that she was observing him, he turned away, and began talking with animation to his partner. Her pride was roused, and she resolved to do the same. As she descended to the supper-room, they met, and he said, in such a kind voice, "Catherine, you look tired ; do have some refreshment," that she started at hearing it : the words were few ; but they were the first he had addressed to her that evening. After supper his health was drank ; and as he went round the room, shaking hands with all the guests, he came to Catherine : she also shook hands with him, and said, in a low tone, "May you be happy!"—more she could not say ; and these touching words were inaudible to any but himself. His eyes were fixed on the ground, and were not raised once to her face. The next moment she was obliged to attend to a long dissertation on the relative merits of fox and stag hunting ; devoutly wishing all the time that her prosy partner

had been engaged with either of the sports he so knowingly expatiated upon. As she left the supper-table, she was again met by Lord Sandford, who requested her to dance the country dance with him. She bowed assent; and immediately giving her his arm, he led her to the ball-room. They spoke on indifferent subjects,—the weather, the ball, &c. Scarcely had they reached the dancing-room when Lord Sandford desired the musicians to play a country dance, and left his partner to persuade others to join the dance. Ah! thought Catherine, he has chosen this dance to avoid conversation with me. For more than half the time he can only talk to those on either side of him. It was as she thought; and very few and far between were the words that passed between them. Had he said one word of returning love, gladly would she have overlooked the past: but not a thought of the kind seemed to cross his mind; and immediately on reaching the bottom of the row, she declared she was too tired to dance any more. He attempted to remonstrate with her; but, when she said in a firm, cold tone, “Lord Sandford, I wish to sit down,” he started.

"And is it come to this," he said; "must I call you Miss Selby?"

"It had better be so, Lord Sandford," she sadly replied; "it can do neither of us any good to use names which only remind me so keenly of what you have so lately caused me to suffer."

His mother had now approached them; so, merely saying, "Catherine is tired," he committed her to Lady Sandford's care, and left the room.

Catherine felt now that she might have gone too far—that she had said more than she ought: but her words could not be unsaid; and the ball being now ended, she pleaded excessive fatigue, and departed with her mother. As they crossed the hall to their carriage, they were joined by Lord Sandford, who offered his arm to Mrs. Selby.

"Return," she said, "Lord Sandford, to the ball-room, and assist your mother."

Her words roused him; and with a look of despair and wretchedness he said, "Good-night," and left them.

Catherine leaned back in the carriage, and allowed her tears freely to flow: the necessity for exertion being over, she could no longer restrain herself.

The day was beginning to dawn, and the fields, even at that early hour, were filled with gleaners. As Catherine saw their worn and tired faces, she wished she might have been allowed to work with them, rather than to pass through such an ordeal as she had just gone through. But it was over: they had met, probably for the last time. He had been strange and odd, and she felt "that each passing scene would teach him to forget," while she would have little to divert her thoughts from all she had suffered: still she was glad that she made the effort to go.

Scarcely could she be more wretched than Lord Sandford himself. He returned, indeed, to the dancing-room, but the little pleasure he had felt was gone. He well knew how deeply they loved one another, and that there was no earthly objection to their marriage, had he used his own sense and judgment, instead of wickedly allowing others to decide for him. Mr. Hawkins was not there in person, but the dread of his censure was ever before Sandford's eyes; who verily believed that he could break his engagement to Catherine with less remorse, and with a better plea of doing right, than disregard the counsel of

his spiritual adviser. Such was the state of mental degradation to which Mr. Hawkins had reduced one of the best and finest dispositions; and thus it is that craft and hypocrisy so often succeed in obtaining their ends over those who have no firmness of character.

CHAPTER IX.

As we have said before, Catherine, notwithstanding her misery, felt glad the next morning that she had gone to the ball: was pleased that she had been once more in the same room with Sandford, and that they had danced again together. She still thought he loved her; or why should he follow her every movement in the way he had done? But again she reasoned, could he, if this were really the case, condemn me to so much suffering? His behaviour altogether was a problem which she could not solve. What impediments there could exist to their marriage she knew not. Dark suspicions of Miss Rabbit, Mr. Hawkins, and even Lady Sandford, crossed her mind: for formerly his mother had always been particularly cordial and partial to her; now she was strangely cold and distant. Elizabeth

alone remained the same warm-hearted friend she had ever been.

It appeared, as if in revenge for the glories of the autumn, the winter meant to be particularly severe; and towards the end of October the weather became intensely cold. Little communication, except by letter, had taken place between Harden Hall and the Rectory since the night of the ball; with the exception of Elizabeth, who was daunted by no weather, and who came over frequently to see her friend. Catherine had heard from others that Lord Sandford was still at Harden Hall: but Mrs. Selby had strongly urged the two friends to talk less of him; that it could do no possible good, and might do much harm; not that she forbade them naming him, but only recommended them to exert themselves to speak on other topics. So hopeless did the attempt now seem to Elizabeth of ever inducing her brother to renew those attentions to his first love,—so completely was he taken up with Mr. Hawkins, that she felt quite angry with him. There were times, however, when he rushed into her room, saying how wretched he was, despised by others,

and particularly by himself. In the tenderest way she besought him to go with her to the Rectory ; that she would answer for his obtaining a favourable interview ; that she knew Catherine loved him. His face brightened as he heard this, and a soft smile played on his countenance, and lighted up his large, expressive eyes : yet it was but transitory, and fled in a moment. Then sinking down before Elizabeth, he entreated her forgiveness. Greatly shocked, she bade him rise, and entreated him to remain with her another hour, while she urged all she thought Catherine would have wished her to say. He passively sat down ; and she then asked him what was the ostensible reason he gave himself for abandoning one so worthy of him in every respect ? He winced under the question, but at length confessed that he knew no reason, nor should he ever have thought of such a thing, had it not been for Mr. Hawkins ; who had so impressed upon him the sin of marrying a worldly-minded girl that he was persuaded by him to relinquish Catherine.

“The odious little wretch !” exclaimed Eliza-

beth ; " and does he think it a proof of a *pious* mind to vow solemnly to make a woman your wife, and then to break those vows ? Oh ! my brother, only consider on what a precipice you stand. I know I cannot argue that black is white in the same way as Mr. Hawking can do ; but if there is such a thing as right and wrong, the most honourable thing to do in the eyes of men, and the most *pious* (to use your father confessor's own word) before God, is to keep those promises, even if to your own hinderance."

Sandford felt how truly and nobly his sister spoke, and that he never had been able to unravel the mystery of Hawkins's antipathy to very early marriages, or find out what had given him such a dislike to Catherine. When he heard from his sister of the actively good life Catherine was leading, of her affection to her own family, her attention and kindness to the poor, her total disregard of self, her declining health and sadness of spirits ; when he heard all this, told with the warmth and animation peculiar to Elizabeth ; he determined to go to Catherine instantly, and entreat

forgiveness. What more might have passed between this brother and sister it is impossible to say: but at that moment the canting voice of Mr. Hawkins was heard calling Sandford. He started up, exclaiming, “I am coming!” but Elizabeth flew to the door, and locking it, quietly took possession of the key.

“No, Sandford,” she exclaimed, “you shall not escape from me till you promise to see Catherine. And tell me first,” she said, in an authoritative manner, “what this man wants of you?”

The colour mounted high in Sandford’s face, and he said, in a low voice, “I cannot tell you.”

“But you can—you must;” and, always carried away by the warmth of others, Sandford confessed to her that he was going to his study, where Mr. Hawkins usually came at that hour; and that he gave him an account of all that had passed that day, of all his thoughts and projects.

Elizabeth actually screamed with horror. “Impossible!” she said. “Oh! Sandford, say you are jesting. Let me not hear from

your own lips, that you are becoming a Papist ! Oh ! unsay your words."

He shook his head. Elizabeth fell on her knees, and in audible words prayed for her brother—prayed that he might not be led astray from the true Church. He was moved : he threw his arms round her neck, and besought her to calm herself ; saying that her fears were premature : that he knew many of the opinions he had lately received were condemned as Popish doctrines, but he thought differently.

" But how can you defend this odious practice of confessing to Mr. Hawkins ?" asked his sister, " for that is contrary to the sound doctrine of the Church of England, to which you belong. So now, all that I have told you will be repeated to Mr. Hawkins, and by him retailed to Miss Rabbit ! And this is what you call your affection to me ! your duty by me ! Remember, Sandford," and her voice trembled with sad emotion, " that I have no fond father to stand by me ; and that when a brother deserts his sister she is lonely indeed !" Without another word she placed

the key in the door ; and, after giving her a tender kiss, Sandford left her.

A short time after this trying interview, Lady Sandford announced her intention of going to the sea-side : of course Elizabeth was obliged to accompany her mother and Miss Rabbit. Lady Sandford had become very fond of Mr. Hawkins, though she complained that he took her son a great deal away from her. But the artful man flattered her with notions of her great wisdom ; and to enable her to talk with her dear little priest, as she called him, she had her table strewed with books on the Eucharist and Common Prayer, beautifully illuminated.

Lord Sandford was thankful for anything that absorbed his mind, and greedily devoured the books which Mr. Hawkins poured upon him with a liberal hand. It had not always been thus with Mr. Hawkins : many a tale was told by his college comrades of the wild pranks he had played, and of the *fast* life he had led : but this he at all events had forgotten, and perhaps wished to prove ‘the greater the sinner the greater the saint.’

One evening at Harden Hall, when there was a large party of young people assembled together, Lady Elizabeth proposed having a little dancing, and asked Mr. Hawkins if he would join their quadrille. He lifted up his hands and eyes with astonishment, at the bare idea of his being able to move his legs quickly to the sound of music ; though had she asked him to walk ten miles, he would gladly have done it. Such is the absurdity of prejudice ! Elizabeth disliked him more than ever for refusing to dance with her little cousin.

“The little prude !” she observed, “as if it were not an honour to him to be asked to stand up to dance with us !” Even Sandford was annoyed at his refusal, but Elizabeth was determined not to press him, gave up the quadrille, and waltzed the whole evening. After thus disgusting the whole party by his ungraciousness, Mr. Hawkins left the saloon to brood over other matters ; and *this he called religion.* But his hateful presence was not much longer bestowed at Harden Hall. He had become doubly more distasteful to Elizabeth, because he was daily paying her mother great attention, with which

she was fool enough to be pleased, and she made such a fuss about him, that her children were much annoyed. Sandford was even heard to say, that had his mother been younger, or Hawkins older, very possibly she would have married him!

The time drew near for them to go to the sea, and Mr. Hawkins took his leave; much to the relief of Elizabeth; and perhaps, if the truth were known, to Sandford himself; who was secretly not sorry to be again his own master.

CHAPTER X.

LORD SANDFORD had not forgotten his interview with his sister; much that she had said had struck him forcibly, and he determined to prolong his stay at Harden Hall a few days, that he might see Catherine. Not a word of this was breathed to any one save Elizabeth; who warmly approved, and applauded the scheme. After having once come to this conclusion, he saw the carriage drive off with comparatively little sorrow. He felt that for the first time for months he was following his own inclination, and that was leading him right; and his sister's bright, last look of approval might have given hope even to a heart of stone. Two hours after their departure, he was at the Rectory door, and inquired in a trembling voice if Miss Selby was at home? Being answered in the affirmative, he sprang from

his horse, and was rushing into the house, when a sense of the length of time that had elapsed since he had been there, and of his recent behaviour, came over him ; and with a feeling of chagrin and self-abasement, he drew back for the servant to lead the way. The drawing-room door opened, and he saw Catherine standing at the further window, gazing into the garden ; her pencil was in her hand ; but it was evident at that moment, she was lost in thought. Lord Sandford, when the servant had retired, went softly towards her and said, *Catherine*. She started round and would have fallen, had he not caught her and borne her fainting in his arms to the sofa. He gently placed her there, and as he saw the returning colour slowly appear in her beautiful cheek, he pressed her cold hand and almost cursed himself that he could have ever deserted one so fair ! Gradually reviving and recovering her presence of mind, she rather drew back, and inquired what Lord Sandford wished to say to her ? Her voice trembled, yet her manner was perfectly self-possessed and calm. He felt how different this was

from what it would have been, had he behaved as he ought!—He spoke of his wretchedness, of his love, and urged her to forgive him; he spoke of many obstacles that at present existed to their marriage, but said if she would forgive and love him as before, all would yet end well!

And was it really true, that he was again soliciting her affection? that he was suing for her love? It appeared to her like a dream! She could not realise it to herself. She gasped for breath, and asked in a thrilling tone, to what she owed this change, and whether it were a lasting one? He inwardly acknowledged she had a right to press this cutting question, but what answer could he give? He was sincere at that moment, but the dread of Mr. Hawkins was before him. He answered that he was in earnest; but that . . .

“Mr. Hawkins must be consulted,” interrupted Catherine, without anger, but in a tone of the deepest sorrow. Sandford could not deny it; so extraordinary was this influence over him, that even at that moment he could not shake it off. Catherine sighed deeply; she

indeed wished she had been spared that visit; for to know that he loved her, and had not firmness of character to acknowledge it, was only adding bitterness to bitterness. To him it was also sorrowful: for that he really loved her, there was no doubt, and he was on the point of saying "Nothing should ever divide them," when the door opened, and Mr. Selby walked in. Astonishment at first made him silent; and he stood gazing on the two lovers with the liveliest interest; then turning towards Sandford, he expressed his surprise at seeing him. He made no allusion to their peculiar situation, and as other members of the family came dropping in, the conversation soon became general. But Sandford's eyes were riveted on Catherine with such an expression of love and tenderness, that Mr. Selby imagined that an *eclaircissement* had taken place, and that they were again happy together: yet the extreme languor and sadness in Catherine's demeanour forbade this hope. Still Sandford remained chatting away, evidently with the intention of seeing more of Catherine; who at length complained of fatigue and

faintness, and before any one could reach the sofa where she was sitting, she had fallen back in a swoon. He was greatly alarmed, and rushing to her apparently lifeless form, he seized hold of both her hands, clasped them convulsively, and seemed distracted : no sign of animation appeared, and Mr. Selby, becoming really alarmed, sent for medical advice, and begged Sandford to leave the room ; as, if she did revive on the application of stronger remedies, the shock of seeing him would be too much. Without opposition, he acquiesced in such a reasonable proposal, and left the room—a few moments afterwards, the house. He felt he had *now* no right to remain there any longer than to hear that she was restored to herself. The medical man prescribed perfect quiet and repose, and strongly prohibited all excitement. The next day he received a note from Mr. Selby, saying that his daughter was better, but that he must not return to the house, as the least thing excited her.

After a fortnight's confinement to a sick chamber, Catherine was again able to descend

into the sitting-room. The first day she was not surprised at not seeing Lord Sandford: she was always willing to make excuses for him—that he was afraid it would be too much for her; that he did not know she could see him, *et cetera*; but when a week elapsed without hearing of him, she was again anxious. She had now quite recovered her strength, and went out walking with her sisters, and amused herself with the same occupations as before; but her mother perceived that it was a greater effort to her to appear cheerful, and she besought her to tell her all that had passed between them that eventful afternoon. Mrs. Selby could not contain her indignation against such mean, base conduct, and tried to persuade her daughter to renounce Sandford—that he was utterly unworthy of her. Alas! at the same time, she felt how impossible it was to do so: but, even while consoling her daughter, she thought it her duty to put his weak, wavering conduct in the strongest possible light; for she felt most keenly, how scandalously he had behaved to her darling child.

Not long afterwards, a letter from Elizabeth

announced that the Sandfords were returned to Harden Hall, and that she would see her in a few days: she also said that her brother had gone to town; whence he meant to pay several visits, and return to town by the opening of parliament; and that their present plan was to join him in London. This letter was kind, considerate, and cheerful; but it was little short of a death-blow to poor Catherine's hopes. She knew that there existed little probability of their meeting for months,—perhaps never,—and it grieved her deeply that he had left the country without one word—one farewell. What could have been the object of paying *her* a visit, she could never divine. Sometimes the bitter idea crossed her, that he had come to laugh at and quiz her: but she rejected the injurious thought, and strove to think that it had been compliance with his mother's wishes which had prevented her again seeing him.

A few days afterwards, Elizabeth arrived at the Rectory, and Catherine told her of her brother's visit: she hid nothing from her, more than from her own sister. *She* had

nothing to blush for : Sandford had sought her in her own home, and found her there. Elizabeth was so grieved at this wanton piece of cruelty, as she termed it, that she could not say one word to exculpate her brother : and bad indeed must be the actions of a brother, when a fond sister cannot find an excuse for them. He seemed to her to have had no object in going once to the Rectory, professing so much, and doing nothing ; and, angry with Sandford, she advised Catherine to renounce him, and never again to see him !

“ It is very likely,” she said, “ I may never see him again ; for he is gone away for some time, I hear : if this be so, it is very possible he may never see Catherine Selby again ;” and a sad smile spread over her features. Elizabeth conjured her not to give way to such lowness of spirits, for her own sake ; and especially for the sake of her mother. She wept with Catherine, that all their bright dreams were over. But how could she exist without Catherine ? How could she live without one whom she should always consider as a fond sister ?

Catherine promised to struggle against dejection and sad forebodings ; and Elizabeth urged that as she had hitherto succeeded so well, it would be a thousand pities now to give way.

“ And you have not given the most powerful reason yet,” replied Catherine : “ which is, that no man shall ever have the satisfaction of thinking that he has made me wretched ! that my first bloom of youth has fled through his neglect ! Rather would I die ten thousand deaths than that Sandford should think I still retained any regard for him, when he has cast away his love for me !”

Her heightened colour and firmer voice showed how true her words were, and Elizabeth encouraged this idea very much. But Catherine’s momentary excitement passed away; and she appeared more depressed than ever. Fortunately, some of the younger children came in, and gave a turn to the conversation : they made it lively and cheerful, and their innocent questions, and amusing remarks, extorted many a laugh from the two friends.

But minutes of sweet converse with an

early friend soon pass away: the carriage was announced as ready to take Lady Elizabeth home; who promised, if possible, to return soon. But her heart was sad; her mother's coldness and Miss Rabbit's dislike to the Selbys had very much increased of late, and it was with difficulty that she now obtained permission to have the carriage to take her to the Rectory. She left Catherine, too, low and dejected, pale and thin, with a slight cough; and the winter was not yet over. As she kissed her she begged and entreated she would take every care of herself; that she would not over-exert herself; and, above all things, that she would write very often: as the following week she should be absent from Harden Hall; and with every expression of love and regard, the amiable Lady Elizabeth took her leave. After she was gone, Catherine felt completely isolated from the Sandford family. During their absence from Harden Hall she should hear nothing of Lord Sandford; for it was more than probable Elizabeth herself would know nothing of him. He had lately been so reserved to her,

so engrossed with Mr. Hawkins, that it was impossible to surmise what his conduct would be. Catherine had read and heard of the intense misery of being attached to an unworthy object ; but she had never really imagined anything so overpowering, so heart-rending, as what she then experienced at having discovered that she had bestowed her warmest affections upon one, who had indeed been deemed perfect, honourable, and attached ; and whose professions, in fond credulity, had been believed to be sincere : but who proved himself to be a weak, wavering, and heartless wretch—upon one who on a sudden deserts, neglects, and spurns the woman who was devoted to him, and for no better reasons than the want of paltry pelf, and the fear that her influence would militate against the influence of a designing *soi-disant* friend. But it was not in Catherine's gentle nature to indulge long in such bitter thoughts : she sought to palliate to herself Sandford's offence ; she strove to think she herself might be in fault—might be altered : indeed she felt that she was strangely so since the days they

had first loved one another. But was not this his doing? Were not those pale looks, that stooping figure, the effect of broken rest, of deep anxiety of mind? She forgave him all; she harboured no thought of ill-will towards him: she even prayed for his happiness, and prayed for herself that she might be enabled to overcome her great love. She felt that perhaps she had loved him more than any one should love a mortal creature, and being thus unrequited was her punishment. She tried to think it was all for the best, and ordered by a good and merciful Providence.

CHAPTER XI.

As Elizabeth had foretold, some time was to elapse before she again saw Catherine. They corresponded regularly; but the principal thing that interested Catherine it was not in the power of Lady Elizabeth to touch upon: indeed, she herself knew but little about Sandford, excepting that he was in town. She talked of various schemes they had for passing the summer; either of going to the sea, or going abroad: but the last letter announced they had decided on passing a few months at Hastings. Elizabeth observed that she did not regret losing the season; for they had but few acquaintances, and this made London dull. She felt that from her rank she might reasonably have expected to have been more in the gay and fashionable world. She heard of parties without end amongst those whom she

and her family ought to have known, without being invited to any; so that on the whole, she was glad to escape from London. "Besides," she added, "mama has been much smitten with the idea of being introduced to Lady Dougal, and all her family, through Miss Rabbit, whose sister is governess to her children; but for my part," continued Elizabeth, "I thought this rather too much of a good thing; and having no notion of obtaining an entrance into a large house through Miss Rabbit, I persuaded mama to give up going to town altogether this year. The only thing I regret is, that by this arrangement I shall miss seeing you. Of course you will be in town, and Susan also: she will be coming out. I rejoice at this, dear Catherine, as the amusement of going out with her will draw you a little from yourself; and I shall expect, from both, long descriptions of everything and everybody, and of all Susan's conquests. Alas! dear Catherine, that you could meet with some one more worthy of your affections! I have not heard from Sandford for the last month. He writes daily to mama;

sometimes I am allowed to see his letters, and sometimes not; which is a hard case, as Miss Rabbit always reads them. I have written beseeching him over and over again to send me a line; and he answers me with a kind message in mama's letter: *mais c'est tout.*

Catherine easily perceived from the whole tenor of her friend's letter, that she was unhappy; and she felt deeply for Elizabeth. Her home was now miserable; her mother jealous of her, her ex-governess detesting her; her brother deserting and neglecting her. How much did Catherine wish that she had a home to offer her! How different would have been Elizabeth's fate, had her brother married Miss Selby; and how happily would she have lived with them. But Catherine could only rejoice that Lady Sandford was not going to town. She hoped, yet scarcely even to herself allowed the feeling, that there she might see Lord Sandford; and that he might again, during his lady mother's absence, renew their intercourse. She was of far too sanguine a nature not to hope as long as there was one ray left; Yet had she been obliged to define the hopes

which animated her, she would have found it a difficult task ; they were so vague, so uncertain.

The spring was unusually backward, and Catherine and all her family quitted the wintry looking country without regret. To her, although she combated strongly the feeling, her home was becoming more mournful, more distasteful ; she longed to leave it—she longed for change ; and when her mother saw that the energy and alacrity of former days was returning, since the visit to London was proposed, she trusted that the change of scene and the excitement might be of service to her child : at any rate, she would have less time to indulge in melancholy thoughts. Mrs. Selby could not deny but that all hopes that her child would ever be united to Lord Sandford, were vain. When she found that Catherine's anxiety to reach town rested upon the chance of meeting Lord Sandford, and saw her flushed cheek and appetite gone, the tender mother feared for the consequences. Catherine's bodily strength was not great, and in the evening of the day previous to their

leaving the Rectory, she had fainted away from nervous excitement and fatigue. The doctor ordered perfect quiet, and giving her some strong cordial draught, left her, hoping to find an improvement in the morning. He was an old friend of the family, and had daughters of his own. He had watched with anxiety over Catherine, ever since that eventful visit of Lord Sandford's, when he had been summoned in to attend her ; he knew that in her case, medical skill was but of little avail, and the kind-hearted old man dropped a tear on her white hand, as he leant over the couch. The next morning she was much recovered, and all impatience to begin the journey ; and at length, to her infinite pleasure, they were fairly off. Her father, always cheerful, enlivened the journey with snatches of old songs, and tales of the places through which they passed, to the no small amusement of the children ; and even Catherine appeared interested and amused : as this was his object he drew largely on his store. His was a memory of such retentive power, that when once a thing was known by him it was never

forgotten ; though, perhaps, for twenty years it might have lain dormant, without being once called forth, it was then repeated with perfect accuracy. As they approached the great metropolis, Catherine's fever of excitement was succeeded by such extreme languor and depression, that her mother really became alarmed, and doubted whether they had done wisely in bringing her to town. However, as the journey had been undertaken, she could only hope against hope, that all would turn out well. The day which had been fine and bright was now clouded and sombre ; a drizzling mist came on, so that the streets looked melancholy and deserted. Catherine saw nothing of this, and heeded none of Susan's bright and animated remarks. One thought alone occupied her, *Will he love me as before?*

How mercifully is it ordained that the future should be veiled to us ! But at this moment Catherine felt otherwise : she fancied it would have been the *acmé* of happiness to have looked forward, to what, alas ! she still anticipated would make her supremely happy. She knew nothing of what was pass-

ing around her ; and when the carriage stopped in Grosvenor Street, she started, apparently quite unconscious where she was. Her father gently and tenderly told her they had arrived ; she clasped her hands tightly across her forehead, and then gazed up into his face, with that look of affection and love with which she at all times regarded him. Putting her arm into his, she said, distinctly, “ I am ready,” and hastened up the steps into the house. The pleasurable delight, and cordial warmth with which they were received by Mr. and Lady Anne Lyndsay, drew Catherine from herself. Her attachment to them was so great, that for the first half-hour she was in that house she might again be called happy. Though her happiness was but brief—a transient joy—it revived her drooping spirits, and she was cheerful. She heard from her grandmother, that they had not seen Lord Sandford ; that he had called when she was out, and when they asked him to dinner he had been engaged. Catherine bit her lip with vexation : she had at least hoped to have heard how he was looking ; and whether he

was cheerful or sad. But she was doomed to disappointment; and as she laid her head on her pillow that night, it was moistened with many a tear of sorrow and grief. Many a resolution did she form to forget him; but in vain: not a thought arose in her mind which was not in some way or other connected with him. Catherine had never heard Lady Brooke's name mentioned, till Lady Anne Lyndsay told her she heard Lord Sandford was there a great deal; and she knew not that there was a Lady Rachel Hunt in the case. This was fortunate, as it would have only added to her disquiet. One thing gave her pleasure, which was that Elizabeth had informed her that she had mentioned their going to town to Sandford; "but," she added, "Mr. Hawkins is with him." Catherine sighed as this name met her eyes. *This sigh* was even more than Lord Sandford deserved at her hands.

CHAPTER XII.

As the two sisters were to appear at the drawing-room the week after they reached town, they had not too much time to complete all the needful preparations; accordingly, scarcely was their breakfast despatched, when they sallied forth to make the necessary purchases. Never had Catherine been so solicitous that her apparel should be becoming; nor was she less so about that of her sister. That they should be remarkable for the elegance and simplicity of their dress, was the aim of both sisters; and Susan was enchanted to see the eagerness with which Catherine entered into all the petty details. She hoped it was the prelude to brighter spirits, and that the cloud which had for so long shaded her sister's brow, was now to be removed. To Susan herself no cloud appeared; all was sun-

shine. She was in a perfect ecstacy of delight *at coming out*—with being in town, with choosing her presentation dress, with admiring all she saw—that she knew not how to contain her happiness ; it was of infinite service to Catherine having her there, to divert her attention from herself. Up and down every street did Catherine anxiously gaze, hoping to catch a glimpse of Lord Sandford : he was not to be seen ; and that afternoon she was obliged to go and make many visits with her mother. In vain she strained her eyes after every rider : the one she sought, was not to be seen ; and late in the afternoon, she returned home wearied and dispirited. Many cards were on the marble table in the entrance hall : she hastily glanced over them, but the name she pined to see was not there ; and with a sigh she proceeded up stairs. That sigh was not unheeded by her gentle mother, who was close to her : but even that mother, who would willingly have given her life for her child, could not in this instance spare her one pang. The following day was spent much in the same routine as the preceding one, and in sore dis-

tress, occasioned by Lord Sandford's apparently intentional neglect.

As Catherine was sitting brooding over these things, her face resting on her hands, absorbed in painful thoughts, she heard footsteps approaching, and on looking up, perceived her father coming towards her, with a bright and pleased countenance. Immediately she knew he had agreeable news to communicate. Placing a chair near her, and with his arm tenderly encircling her, he gently drew her towards himself and imprinted a fond kiss on her fair brow ; then taking one of her burning hands in his, he told her that he had that moment parted from Sandford, who had been walking with him. She hung on his words to hear if there was any mention made of herself. Her father continued to say that Sandford had been *en route* to call on Mrs. Selby—Catherine's heart beat more quickly as she heard this—that having met him, they had continued their walk together, and on parting he said that he would certainly call soon : more than this Mr. Selby could not add, for Sandford had carefully avoided mentioning

Catherine, and her father had been equally scrupulous. They had talked much of Sandford's affairs, and it appeared quite evident that he was decidedly unhappy—that he had no object in life—that he had cast away rare and great happiness for the empty flattery of a vain, ambitious man; whose aim, in which he had succeeded, was to make himself indispensably necessary to him in the every-day affairs of life. Mr. Selby was grieved at this: he had expected so much better things—such different results from all his care and instructions; yet did he not forget that, having performed his duty by him, he was exonerated from blame: the result no man could control. They had walked together for some time; and from several things that Sandford had dropped in the course of conversation, Mr. Selby feared he was but too easily led: this failing somewhat reconciled him to his daughter's disappointment.

As they parted, Mr. Selby said, "You have not asked after my children. I conclude you will be glad to hear that *Arthur* is well, and is shortly expected home." His daughter's

name hung on his lips, yet he uttered it not ; and mutually grieved and disappointed, they took leave of one another : though, at the same time, pleased that their intercourse had been resumed.

With much warmth, and a few tears, Catherine thanked her father for his considerate kindness : again she felt sanguine ; again, bright delusive hope called on her to look forward to a happy future ; and he had scarcely left the room, before she threw herself on the sofa ; where, worn out with fatigue and over excitement, she was, in imagination, soon soaring into realms of bliss and love,—such as certainly on this side the grave have never been realised. She imagined that they were married ; that they were strolling side by side, through verdant meadows ; that the sun shone in all its glory ; that the birds sung, and they themselves were the most joyous and happiest of all ! She felt he loved her deeply, and that she returned his affections tenfold : it was such a dream of bliss as a girl of twenty may be forgiven for indulging in. But how quickly did it fade away ! Still, the good effects

were visible in the increased life and spirits it had given her. She began to think she was right, and that now Sandford was in town without his mother (who she was convinced was jealous of her), that they should see each other constantly. All was hope, cheering hope: and if her mother was less sanguine, she could not but rejoice at anything that made her darling more like her former self. From breakfast till luncheon the next day, did Catherine watch from the window, in hopes *he* would call: but in vain—he came not; and in the afternoon there were visits to be paid, and she was obliged to go out.

That same day Mr. Selby again met Lord Sandford; and for three successive days it appeared as if he was continually hovering about the house, yet never venturing to approach the door. Catherine's wretchedness was increased by this extraordinary behaviour: to feel that he was continually near her without her seeing him; to know that he passed under their windows every day, yet never called, drove her half distracted: and so dreadfully did she

suffer from headache, that she began at times to fear the loss of reason. The fourth day he called ; she was then engaged with many visitors in the drawing-room ; he was ushered in, and the lovers met as common acquaintances,—they who had so short a time before parted with the deepest emotions of love and fidelity! The heart of woman must, indeed, be full of tenderness to forgive such undeserved neglect. Catherine was showing some prints to a young lady when Lord Sandford entered; their eyes met, and hers were dimmed with tears when she perceived that he was gazing at her: her voice trembled a little as she desired the servant to inform Mr. Selby,—but she did not trust herself to mention a name which she knew would excite from the other visitors a thousand looks and remarks. He turned to the window, apparently not less agitated than she was herself: one by one, her friends departed, and he was left with only Mr. and Mrs. Selby and Catherine. After wishing them good-bye, she sank into an arm-chair, apparently quite exhausted with the effort she had made. Her father, per-

ceiving this, spoke with greater animation on some political measures,—thus giving his daughter time to recover herself. Lord Sandford remained some little time talking on indifferent subjects. His eyes were scarcely ever off Catherine: she even exerted herself so far as to join in the conversation; and so well did she acquit herself, that afterwards her mother told her she had behaved beautifully. He seemed unwilling to leave them; and the thought flashed across Catherine, he might wish to see her alone; so, rising up, she exclaimed, “Oh, you have not seen our picture of Arthur!” and led him into the next drawing-room. He felt what an opportunity this would be for an explanation: he longed to say something; but as he was making up his mind to do so, the door opened, and a lady entered. They were talking eagerly on the merits of the picture; and with great presence of mind, Catherine went to welcome the old lady, and asked her whether she thought the portrait did her brother justice. Lord Sandford was not so self-possessed; and, muttering his adieu to Catherine, rushed out of the room.

The visitor said she feared she had scared the young man away, but soon forgot him in her admiration of Arthur; and Catherine felt truly thankful that they had been interrupted by this quiet old lady instead of some inquisitive young one. Yet it was a cruel heart-breaking disappointment that he had left without one word especially directed to herself.

Not a day passes without Mr. Selby meeting Lord Sandford; they go together to choose pictures; they walk together to the exhibitions. Mr. Selby puts himself to considerable inconvenience, in the hopes that it will forward his daughter's happiness; but, as yet, without success.

On his own thoughts, Sandford showed more reserve than Mr. Selby could have thought possible with one who had been his father's most intimate friend; and who since the father's death, when the son was but a child, had been devoted to him. That Sandford had some hidden source of disquiet to himself he did not doubt; and several times he attempted to discover what it was: but he did

not succeed ; though he strongly suspected that it was connected with Catherine, and caused by the interference of Mr. Hawkins. Good man as he was, Mr. Selby had conceived a great aversion to the latter : he looked upon him as a cringing, designing person, who made his profession the means of obtaining undue influence over his friend, and who was in every respect, saving the name,—a Papist.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE morning of the drawing-room was beau-
teous and sunny even in London, and at an
early hour Susan was all delight and excite-
ment at the idea of the gay scene in which for
the first time she was to take a part: though
not without many fears of being terribly
alarmed when the moment arrived. Many of
their nearest relations had begged to be al-
lowed to see the fair sisters dressed for the
gay pageant, and Susan was busy tying up
two lovely bouquets when the servant an-
nounced Lord Sandford. It was but ten
o'clock, and she welcomed him gaily, for hers
was a cheerful heart.

"You are early," she said; "we have
scarcely finished breakfast." He appeared
to breathe more freely on perceiving she was
alone; and they chatted away merrily on

every subject that occurred to them. After they had been together about half an hour, Catherine came in ; she looked flushed at seeing him there, and the soft carnation glow that tinged her cheek made her in his eyes most lovely. He said, that had he known they were to attend the drawing-room, he would have gone there too ; and he talked, as in former days, gaily and cheerfully. Eleven and twelve o'clock came, and with it many aunts and cousins to see the gay paraphernalia. It was Susan's first appearance in public, and a prettier girl had perhaps been but rarely seen. Catherine felt very much gratified at the evident admiration her sister excited ; she determined to exert herself to the utmost ; she talked, she laughed with everybody, even with Sandford himself, in the same sweet manner he had formerly thought so irresistible. Many expressive looks were exchanged by the different cousins as Lord Sandford's name was heard, and many a guess given that it would not be very long before he too was enrolled among the list of cousins. Certainly this was the most natural and rational conclusion to

arrive at ; or why should a young man not in the slightest degree related to them, be so anxious about the sisters' appearance as to wish to see them dressed for the drawing-room : it was not customary ; and Mrs. Selby felt more annoyed than she cared to express. But when she saw how gay and happy Catherine appeared, she trusted that some little explanation had taken place before she had joined them ; and she again gazed fondly on him who for so long she had regarded as a son. The hour for them to dress had now arrived, and Mrs. Selby said she would undergo this tiresome operation first, as it would give the two sisters more time to remain below. Sandford was evidently devoting himself to Catherine, who was as joyous as she had formerly been. He was eagerly talking to her when Susan was summoned away to be adorned, and she felt that the time was short before she should again have to leave him. In her eagerness, she became quite unconscious of the presence of her relations : again and again she urged his going with them to the drawing-room, he replied that he had an engagement at three

o'clock which it was impossible for him to break through ; had it been otherwise, he would have given the world to have gone with her. She said no more : she was angry with herself that she had even urged him to do so at all, for she felt sure that he might have complied had he really wished it ; and she said in a cold tone, "Where there is a will, there is a way." But his kind and affectionate expressions and tender looks soon recalled her smiles, and she gaily left the room, to be adorned herself for the approaching ceremony.

Mrs. Selby and Susan had appeared, and been duly admired and applauded by all ; the time was approaching for them to take their departure. Lord Sandford had stationed himself close to the door-way, and his eager looks, as he heard footsteps approaching, did not certainly belie the report, already so current, that he was far from being indifferent to the charms of Miss Selby. And Mrs. Selby could not but think that he would scarcely have given such a public proof of his interest in her daughter, had he not been sincere in his admiration of her.

Thus all was sunshine! When Catherine threw open the door and entered the saloon, radiant with smiles, there was a universal exclamation of approval and admiration. She did, indeed, look remarkably well: her train, of the palest pink, contrasted finely with her snowy-lace petticoat, which was looped up with lilies of the valley. Her heightened colour, and the ease of her movements, made her altogether at that moment strikingly handsome.

Sandford felt the full influence of her charms as she approached from the other side of the room; and, going straight towards her, he presented her with a bouquet. Before she had scarcely time to express her animated thanks and pleasure, she was obliged to turn round and bid adieu to all her numerous visitors, who, having now seen the trio, prepared to depart. Sandford still lingered: he appeared bewitched by Catherine; and it was not till after the carriage had been long announced, and that Mrs. Selby said they really must be going, that he arose to take leave of them; and then it was with such evident marks of

affection and admiration for Catherine, that both her father and mother felt convinced that on the morrow, at the latest, he must declare himself. Radiant with the idea of future happiness, Catherine left him with a beaming smile: for Lord Sandford repeatedly assured her that he should call the next day and hear all their adventures. The carriage drove off, and he was left standing alone.

It was fortunate for Catherine that Susan's *naïve* remarks recalled her from the blissful visions she was conjuring up. Before her scattered ideas were scarcely collected, they reached St. James's, and were proceeding rapidly down a long line of high-born dames and damsels to the exciting scene. Susan felt completely bewildered, and every step she took was only likely to make her more so. On reaching the *crush*-room, emphatically so called, they found it full to overflowing: so great was the heat, and so much were they "pushed about," that Susan began to think the scene that was taking place, within two rooms of her Majesty, was not very dignified.

It was in fact disgraceful : for people, not content with elbowing their neighbours right and left, made no scruple of thrusting themselves exactly in front of them ; so, that had it not been for the kindness of an old dowager, Catherine would have been completely separated from her mother. All colour had fled from Susan's cheek, and she appeared very much alarmed : nor was the awful ceremony of passing through the line of attendants likely to reassure her. The voice of her Majesty speaking kindly to her sister set her a little at ease ; but no caged bird ever felt more rejoiced at obtaining its freedom, than did Susan when she found herself again out of the presence-chamber : and meeting with friends, she enjoyed the remainder of the scene very much.

A drawing-room is a lovely sight that all should see : the glittering jewels, the splendid dresses, the waving plumes, the rich uniforms, the galaxy of beauty there assembled, altogether present a scene of splendour and magnificence such as is so often

described in the enchanting pages of the “Arabian Nights.”

As for Catherine, her thoughts were far away from the gorgeous pageantry: she had seen it before several times. To Susan it was quite new, and for her enjoyment they remained some time. Catherine much regretted that Sandford was not with them: she thought that had they been thus publicly seen together he must have declared himself; and her heart ached with the reflection that all that had passed that morning might possibly mean nothing. But unwilling to damp the pleasure of others, she entered warmly into Susan’s enjoyment. At length it was time to return home, and quitting all the glories of the drawing-room, rich with the congregated beauty of the empire, they hastened to their carriage. Susan eagerly expressed her wish to attend another, now that all the fright and distress were over.

“Remember, my love,” replied Catherine, gently tapping her shoulder with her fan—“Remember, there is no rose without a thorn.”

Gently kissing each other, and thanking their kind parents for the trouble they had taken on their account, the sisters ascended to their own room, to divest themselves of all their finery.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT appeared to Catherine ages since she had seen Lord Sandford; and, truth to say, three whole days had elapsed since the drawing-room: from his behaviour on that morning, it was not unnatural that her thoughts should dwell continually upon him. The fourth morning Mr. Selby entered the room, saying to Catherine, who was making the breakfast, "I have heard from Lord Sandford, and he will be delighted to take us over the Temple Church this very day at twelve o'clock, having obtained an order from a friend."

Catherine said nothing; she had so often hoped in vain that even her sanguine nature was beginning to despond: yet after a moment she thanked her father, and signified the pleasure it would give her to see the church. At

a little after twelve, Catherine was summoned from her own room, as Lord Sandford had arrived. She was seized with such violent trembling as scarcely to be able to move; she did not know there was any one with him, but fancied that the moment had now arrived on which her future happiness or misery depended. Quickly recovering herself, she ran down stairs; and, on opening the door, felt reassured—though perhaps slightly disappointed—at perceiving that both her father and mother were there. She received Lord Sandford with her usual sweetness of manner, and bright joy sparkled in her eyes as she shook his hand. He seemed in a great hurry, scarcely sitting down before he was up again; and after ten minutes he jumped up, and looking at the clock said he would meet them at twelve o'clock at the Temple Church. Before Catherine had time to express her astonishment, he was taking leave of Mrs. Selby, and on the point of starting.

“ Surely it will be better, Lord Sandford,” said Catherine, fixing her penetrating eyes upon him, “ for us to give up going: it appa-

rently hurries you, and takes you away from more agreeable pursuits."

She spoke with calmness : though one look from him would have overcome her. He started as he heard his name pronounced with such coldness : he too felt that the breach was nearly made. Yet his evil genius prevailed ; and without heeding his better feelings, which urged him to make some apology, he waved his hand to Catherine and left the room. She seemed stunned : she sat perfectly motionless, till hearing the door-bell ring, she kissed her mother, and rushed from the room. What passed during that short time she was alone is hid from mortal eyes. When the carriage was ready to take them, she appeared perfectly calm and composed, but pale as death ; and the compressed lips and sunken eyes showed how hard the conflict had been through which she had just passed. Her father was so angry with Lord Sandford, that it was with difficulty he could restrain himself from showing it ; and he was on the point of expressing his disapprobation of such conduct, when Catherine laid her hand on his

arm, and said, "Not now, my father : spare him—spare your daughter."

Before they had reached their place of destination, she had so far exerted herself as to talk to Susan. When the carriage stopped, she perceived Lord Sandford waiting to receive them. For one moment it appeared to be beyond her strength again to meet him. She drew her veil over her face, and with a trembling voice bid Susan first get out of the carriage. His arm was proffered to help them, and she leaned on it. Yes, it gave a thrill of joy to her heart to feel that she once more leant on him for support: it was but an instant, and amidst the bewildering noise of other carriages they walked to the entrance-gate.

Much admiration did the exquisite carving and painting, and particularly the extreme beauty of the ceiling, draw forth from all the party. Catherine had a decided taste for architecture, and the beauty of the building drew from her the warmest expressions of admiration; she was delighted with it. But they had not much time to admire it; for their guide seemed possessed with the same fidgetty temper he

had shown that morning in Grosvenor Street: he hurried them through the building at a rapid pace, and Catherine's vexation and annoyance were so great, that they really prevented her thinking so much of her own troubles as she otherwise would have done. That her mother, who had acted a second mother's part to Sandford, should be obliged in this manner to hurry after *him* seemed so shocking—his want of attention was so great—that over and over again she wished they had never come. Catherine could not comprehend these fitful and repeated changes of manner: they were, if possible, more trying and harassing to her than continued neglect would have been. His being one day so affectionate and kind, and the next so strange and cold, wore her to death. They were preparing to depart from the church when a slight shower came on; it quickly passed away, and in the same restless manner as before, Sandford proposed their going round the garden. They had not proceeded far, the two sisters scarcely able to keep up with his pace, when another shower came on; Lord Sandford stopped, and was

then all solicitude that Catherine should be protected from the wet: he begged her to take his umbrella to shield herself from the fast descending rain; and she felt thankful that such was the case, as it had induced him to pay her some of those civilities which she had so long considered as her right. Mr. Selby said he would call the carriage, and coldly wishing Lord Sandford good-morning, led Mrs. Selby away. Scarcely had they reached it when Sandford inquired in an anxious tone if Catherine had suffered from the rain; being answered in the negative, he bowed to them, and coolly walked away. For several minutes Catherine was too much hurt, too much grieved, to speak; and the whole party, all equally disgusted, were perfectly silent. She felt that all must now be at an end between them, and the dreary void she experienced at such a fearful idea drove her distracted. She was utterly miserable: she had placed her happiness in Sandford's hands; he had cast it from him. After seeking her love from the time she was fifteen, he had now apparently become indifferent to her—he

had ceased to love her. Yet still delusive hope urged her to remember how devoted he had been only a few days before, and she quickly conjured up numberless instances of his love: little things that escaped all eyes but her own; little actions that had told her of his deep affection—even the anxiety he had shown that she should not suffer from the rain had something consolatory in it: it was impossible that he could desert her in this abrupt manner. She believed that the next day must bring some explanation of his extraordinary behaviour.

CHAPTER XV.

DAY after day passed over Catherine's head without her seeing or hearing anything of Lord Sandford : a week had elapsed since their memorable expedition to the Temple church. Elizabeth was out of town, and she felt completely forgotten : it was difficult to believe that one who had professed so much, should mean so little. It was cruel to feel oneself so entirely neglected : for had it been otherwise, she would have received some message, some apology from Lord Sandford. Her eyes refused to sleep, her appetite was gone ; and her languor and paleness, which had been much removed when he was with her, returned with tenfold power. She struggled hard to subdue her feelings ; she accompanied her sister to all the balls and parties ; she danced, she laughed with the gayest ; and

none could tell that at that time the whole world appeared to her a dreary desert. Yet it is ever so : however kind, however affectionate are our parents and our brothers and sisters, they cannot fill up the void which is left by the desertion of a lover. They may effect much—they do so—to soften, to alleviate grief ; but it is not in their power to heal the wound. As Catherine felt herself whirled round the room in the giddy waltz, she sighed to think that her dancing, or that anything about her had attracted Sandford : so deeply did she now feel his desertion of her. Still she clung to hope : once he had returned ; why should he not a second time ? His name was never mentioned in Grosvenor Street : Mr, and Lady Anne Lyndsay were too angry—too indignant to hear him even named. It was at the particular request of Catherine that this was so : it was painful to hear him reviled and abused ; it grieved her deeply to hear his faults descanted on ; she still thought him perfect, and therefore entreated her mother to use her influence to induce the whole family not to name him in her presence. With an

anxious wish to indulge her darling child, the request was easily complied with.

It was not till a week afterwards, that one morning, Catherine accompanied her father to her uncle's house. Lord Newport and his family had only arrived in town the preceding evening. Though so devotedly attached to one another when young men, the brothers now met but seldom. Lord Newport had married a proud haughty woman of no rank: only the daughter of a knight; she was handsome, and extremely elated at being a countess. She had always been very jealous at the idea of Mr. Selby's daughters marrying before her own; who, being remarkably ugly, short, dark, and fat, though introduced into the gay world several years before Catherine, had yet not succeeded in changing their names. When, therefore, their lady-mother heard Catherine was to marry Lord Sandford, she was perfectly furious; she had always been jealous of her good looks and extreme popularity, and this *grand parti* was not likely to diminish these amiable feelings of the aunt towards her innocent niece. Nevertheless, the girls

themselves were tolerably affectionate, and, when their mother was not by, expressed much pleasure to each other at again meeting their cousin. Catherine liked the girls, and she pitied them ; for she knew that their home was very uncomfortable, on account of the great wish their mother had to marry them off. It was a great relief to our heroine when she found that Lady Newport was confined to her room with a violent cold ; and the cousins sat down to have a long chat. In the course of conversation, Lady Caroline Selby exclaimed, “ Well, Catherine, have you heard that your old admirer, Lord Sandford, is going to marry Lady Rachel Hunt ? ” Her keen eyes were fixed on Catherine’s face, whose colour heightened. It was as if a dagger had pierced her heart : but quickly recovering herself, Catherine testified her extreme surprise, saying, she had heard from his sister that morning, who did not mention the report. Seeing her apparent confusion, her cousin, who was really a good-natured girl, said, “ Well, then, I dare say it is not true ; —you would certainly have heard it—it

cannot be ;" and they began immediately to speak of some one else.

Oh, how long did the time appear before Mr. Selby returned to his daughter from his conference with her uncle !—how interminable that hour !—Yet she was thoroughly wound up to endure it all, and talked on with her cousins till he made his reappearance ; when, excusing themselves from remaining for luncheon, they took their leave.

When they reached the street, Catherine entreated her father to walk slowly, saying that she had something to tell him ; and drawing her veil tightly over her face, she told him, in a low voice, the report she had heard.

" My dearest love," he said, " and is it possible ?" and, with gentle firmness, he tried to support her feeble, tottering steps. She shook her head : her look of silent anguish agonized the father's tender heart : it was the same he had witnessed on the dying countenance of his lost child—it spoke volumes of blighted hope, of early sorrow. Still she walked on, and even asked her father if he knew who Lady Rachel Hunt was,—for it was the first time she had heard her name.

"She must be a grand-daughter of old Lady Brooke's," he replied.

"Old Lady Brooke!—then she has made up the match," replied Catherine. "Yes," she continued, with bitterness, "she has got hold of Sandford, and obliged him to marry this girl! Now all his behaviour is explained. Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "that I might have seen him again!"

They had reached their own door, and her father led, or rather carried her to her own room, and laid her on the bed. Still she doubted: she could not yet credit that he was positively engaged to another, when so few days had passed since he had paid her such marked attentions. Every look of his recurred to her: and she thought the report must be false. She could not write to Elizabeth. She shed no tears. Perfectly cold and motionless she lay, till her mother returned from her drive. But when that mother appeared, all her firmness was gone; and resting her aching head on that tender bosom, she found relief in a flood of tears. Her mother was deeply grieved: she had to the last clung

to the hope of seeing her child happy. She, too, had heard the report, and instantly returned, hoping to be able in some way to break it to Catherine, and prepare her for this awful shock: but it had been otherwise ordained; and she meekly felt that it was best that it should be so.

Most unfortunately, a large assembly was to be given that night by Lady Anne Lyndsay, and Catherine would be obliged to join the party. It did not commence till late; so that the poor girl, by bathing her aching temples with rose-water, and remaining quiet till the last moment, hoped to be fit to appear.

The intense agony of her bitter thoughts at the utter and entire ruin of all her bright hopes, literally stunned her. She scarcely, as yet, comprehended the full extent of this calamity; and when the time arrived she passively allowed her maid to dress her, quite unconscious of what was passing around. “I cannot yet believe it:” thought she, “so few days have elapsed since he was here—since he *looked* such devotion to me!” Then, again, she recollects his strange behaviour, his hurried

manner at the Temple church. The idea that she had been fondly loving one who had now proved unworthy of her—destitute of all honour and principle—was so bitter to her, that with a feeling of agony, amounting to suffocation, hastily clasping on her bracelets, she rushed to the door, if possible, to escape from herself. But she paused a moment, and, throwing herself on her knees, prayed for support: her tears fell unrestrainedly, and that fair face was indeed the picture of woe and despair. She prayed for him who had caused her so much grief; she prayed for his happiness, for his welfare, present and future. She rose from her knees refreshed, and again having recourse to the aid of rose-water, to obliterate the traces of recent emotion, she determined to join the assembled company. As she approached the saloon, she heard gay and lively tones. She knew that her mother would have prepared her friends to have expected to have seen her pale and wan; for she was subject to violent headaches, and one was pleaded as the cause of her tardy appearance. Again the thought

rushed through her mind, that she was left neglected and despised ; but summoning up all her resolution, she rapidly opened the door, and was in the midst of a gay and brilliant circle. Numberless were the inquiries made after her malady, and warmly and cordially was she received by all ; for she was a universal favourite. Her sister was singing, and she was entreated to join her. This she knew was impossible, and she urged the weak state of her head as an excuse. Never had any evening appeared to her so long, and it was with something akin to glee that she heard the carriages at length announced, and saw the company dispersing. Yet her troubles for that evening were not yet quite over ; for an old lady passing near her, turned round, saying, “ How is Lady Elizabeth Sandford ? and is she pleased with her future sister-in-law ? ” With outward calmness Catherine replied, it was long since they had met, for she was not in town, and bowing to her tormentor she left the room. She retired to her own chamber, but not to sleep : the whole of that night her eyes were never closed : in bitter

agony she tossed from side to side, restless and feverish with mental anxiety. One only image filled her soul: she fancied he was near her, that his large eyes were resting on her: distinctly she appeared to see his open brow, and clustering hair; his eyes, like those of a portrait, whichever way she turned, appeared fixed on her. Never had any night seemed so interminable to her; and with the first dawn of day, she rose and opened wide the shutters. She felt that even light would be a relief; that anything was better than that depth of despair, which the thought of his being united to another had occasioned. Continually through the night she had started up, exclaiming, "It is not true,—he could not thus deceive me!" but towards morning, thoroughly exhausted both in body and mind, she fell into a restless slumber. At first his features still haunted her dreams: but, at length, she fell into a more peaceful sleep, and the clock had struck eleven before she again awoke. The first thing that met her eyes was her mother sitting near her, whose lips she felt pressed with the tenderest affection on her

forehead. She had been long watching her slumbering child, and rejoiced to see a less worn expression on her features than they had exhibited the night before. Catherine felt more equal to go through the duties of this day, and determined, if possible, to restrain all outward emotion: she begged her tender mother not to be too anxious, for that she should get over it. "It shall not kill me, my fond mother," she added; "no, I will struggle against it, though it will and must produce a change in me. Perhaps," she added, "things will turn out differently."

Mrs. Selby fondly embraced her sweet daughter, and left her to perform her morning toilette, while she returned to her mother.

That evening Catherine was obliged to go to a ball that was given by a relation of her father's. She had acted up to her resolution, and not a tear had been shed that day: but her mother urged her not to overtax her strength, for that she might afterwards feel bad effects from doing so; and Catherine affectionately promised to heed her mother's caution. That same evening, no one who

saw her joining in the gay dance, and merry laugh, could have imagined that her heart was gnawed by the deepest sorrow—deeper far than all other sorrows, because all outward show of emotion, or even feeling, is deemed weak and wrong: and this, gentle reader, is a sorrow, which many, very many of your young, fair countrywomen have to endure,—and it is caused entirely by man's selfishness.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE following morning, before Catherine had completed her toilette, she heard at the door the gentle knock of her mother, who entered with an open letter; and for a moment Catherine's heart beat quickly. The first thought that occurred to her was that, probably, it was a letter from Sandford, denying the report of his marriage, and, in return, urging his former suit: for a few short moments she was happy.

Her mother saw in her speaking countenance how contrary her hopes were to the reality, and began by saying, "I have here a note, my love, from Lady Sandford." Catherine's face became crimson, her eyes sparkled; "but, my child, I grieve to say, it is to announce her son's marriage with Lady Rachel Hunt."

A faintness came over Catherine : the room, and all it contained, swam round her, and she fell back on the sofa. Susan bathed her temples to revive her. "I am better," she said ; while her ghastly paleness belied her words. "Give me the letter, darling mother,—give it to me," she continued, fancying she saw some hesitation in her mother's manner, who placed it in her trembling hands. In vain she strove to read it ; her eyes, blinded with tears, refused their office, and she was obliged to wait a few minutes. Then, recovering herself, she sat up, and, taking hold of the fatal note, read it. It was warm, cordial, and affectionate. Lady Sandford appeared overjoyed at the marriage, on account of the Brooke connexion ; she was enchanted with the idea of being connected with several earls and countesses, all related to her future daughter : but the *Brooke connexion* was what particularly pleased her. Disgusted at the *humbug* and palaver of this note, Catherine flung it from her, exclaiming, "Well, that is all past ! alas ! Leave me, dearest mother," she added, "for one half-hour,—I shall then be better : this

blow will drive me mad!" holding her throbbing temples—"my brain is on fire, and Heaven alone knows when it will be cool;" and a bitter smile, such as had never been before seen on her face, spread over her fine features. "Yes, Sandford," she exclaimed, throwing herself into her mother's arms; "most cruelly have we all been deceived!—but I forgive you, and may God forgive you, and make you happy." Her mother soothed her with that tenderness which a mother alone can bestow, and then at her own urgent request left her alone for a short time; that time was spent in imploring mercy, support, and resignation. She joined the rest of the party at the breakfast table, pale and silent, but otherwise no outward marks of sorrow could be seen; she dreaded the sound of her own voice, and sat silently by her father. On that day, she and Susan were to accompany some friends to an horticultural show at Chiswick. Her father offered to excuse his daughter; but so much did Catherine dread the suspicion of being deeply affected by the announcement of Lord Sandford's marriage, that

she determined, cost her what pain it might, to go. It certainly required all her firmness, all her sense of what she owed to herself, to support her during the remarks and criticisms that were made relative to his match. The general feeling was that of surprise : Lady Rachel was so little known, so plain, so insignificant looking, and altogether so dull, that many people told our wretched heroine, that they wondered what could have captivated his lordship. She felt a gleam of satisfaction as she heard this description of her : but it could only be transitory ; for what could it signify to her, whether her rival was dark or fair, agreeable or stupid. That Lady Sandford should have written so affectionately and cordially, galled her to the quick : it said so plainly, that her coldness during the past year had not been without an object ; that now all prospect of Miss Selby ever becoming her daughter was to her infinite delight removed, but that she was the same kind friend to them all she had formerly been.

Catherine felt this change deeply : at times it was with great difficulty she could keep up

any connected conversation ; her mind wandered ; and it was only by setting the strongest watch over herself that she prevented others from seeing her distraction. That Lady Sandford was charmed with the connexion her son was about to form, she doubted not ; but that Sandford was in love with Lady Rachel, she most certainly had her doubts.

Some days had passed away, when Catherine received a letter from Elizabeth, written in the kindest manner : she was evidently unhappy and grieved ; she wept that Catherine was not to be her sister, and she wept even more bitterly to think how completely Sandford had sacrificed himself. She told Catherine that the day after the drawing-room, two of Lady Brooke's sons-in-law had called on her brother, and had been engaged a long time in earnest conversation with him, concluding by saying, that they must positively demand, whether he had any serious intentions towards their niece, Lady Rachel Hunt ; that her father had deputed them, to ask his lordship this simple question, as his manner had already been so marked, that rumours and reports were afloat, which if not

backed up by an immediate proposal, would be most injurious to the young lady's character. Such was the substance of Elizabeth's letter. The sequel was gathered from other sources.

Lord Sandford stared aghast at this speech, and stammered out something to the effect, that he had never been guilty of paying Lady Rachel any attention.

"Stop!" interrupted one of his visitors; "stop, Lord Sandford, and before you commit yourself, tell me why at all hours and all times you have frequented my house; where you always met my niece? If you had no such intentions, let me now tell you, that you are in honour bound to offer your hand to Lady Rachel."

Visions of former days, of Catherine Selby, of Tonnington Rectory, floated through Lord Sandford's distracted brain as his tormentor continued—

"You must know, that on your answer depends your ever again entering my house, or that of any of my family. My niece has money, rank, everything to make it a desirable connexion: but I am sorry we have been so deceived. Farewell, my lord; remember your

character as an honourable man is forfeited."

"No; by Heaven, it shall not be so," exclaimed Lord Sandford. "I will go to Lady Rachel instantly, and ask her hand: if she loves me," and a feeling of desperation came over him, "she shall be mine; if not, I am again free!"

The brothers-in-law looked expressively at each other; they did not scruple thus to urge a weak young man to ally himself with one for whom he professed no feeling of love. They scrupled not, by thus entangling him, to make him wretched for life, and in all probability their niece not less so; merely for the sake of obtaining for her a coronet. He proceeded with his two companions to Lady Brooke's house, and was left alone with Lady Rachel. He coldly asked her hand, but without any symptom of love. The young lady, charmed to escape from the harsh treatment and uncomfortable home of her father, rushed into the yet unknown misery of wedding a man of whose character she knew nothing. He left that house an

hour afterwards an engaged man: and to whom? to one whom he had always considered as totally unable to inspire any love whatever. In this he was right: he pitied her forlornness; her dread of her father inspired compassion; and he had paid her those little attentions which any well-bred young man will pay a girl whose daily annoyances he has witnessed: more than this, he had never thought of doing. As he retraced his way homewards after the desperate step he had just taken, he felt how weakly he had acted; that for life he had chained himself to one whom he professed rather to despise, whilst she who was devoted to him, to whom he was bound by every consideration of honour, was left neglected and sad.

Mr. Hawkins was furiously angry when told of this new engagement; he had hoped to have always prevented Sandford taking this, to him, fatal step. Perhaps this very opposition had, in some degree, confirmed Lord Sandford's resolution of marrying Lady Rachel. He was such a strange compound that it was difficult to understand his character. One thing, how-

ever, he did, after that his engagement to Lady Rachel was publicly known, was to visit her daily : could he have done less ? He strove to love her : but painful, indeed, was the contrast between his second and his first, his only love. He found she had but little information on any subject : even less than he had expected, accompanied with great shyness and reserve. But so anxious had her family been to *catch* him, that one short fortnight after the proposal had been made, the settlements were prepared, and the wedding-day was fixed !

It was by chance that poor Catherine heard all this. Elizabeth was justly disgusted at the whole match, and said that when her brother told her she must love Lady Rachel, she replied, " I have hardly seen her, and much dislike all that I have seen and heard about her little ladyship." In the gentlest manner Catherine urged her not to set herself against the bride : that necessarily they must be thrown a good deal together ; that—

" You are a perfect angel, Catherine," ex-

claimed Elizabeth ; "but I am not, I cannot yet get over Sandford's shameful conduct."

"Oh ! for my sake, do not say so, dearest Elizabeth ; let not this aggravation be added to my misery of causing dissensions in your family. Come to me, dearest, and let me entreat you, as a proof of your love for me, that you will endeavour to love your future sister." Her voice trembled as she said these last words : they were in fact sealing her death-warrant ; and, throwing herself into Elizabeth's arms, she wept freely. Soon, however, she recovered herself, and told her friend that in two days they were all going to the sea-side ; that change of air would do much for her ; and that this must be the last time they must speak on this subject ; that when they met again Elizabeth would have gained a sister, but that she herself would be utterly desolate. " Yet not so," she continued ; "for few are blest with such a home as mine !"

Elizabeth felt that she was right ; that henceforth the subject which had hitherto been their principal topic must be dropped. They agreed that on every other subject the

same candour and openness should subsist between them. With trembling words Catherine asked for frequent letters; for an account of the wedding: she still detained Elizabeth; feeling that this was the last time they should meet as sisters. At length, fearful of overstraining Catherine's strength and making her even more delicate than she was, Elizabeth, in the tenderest manner, left her. She too had her troubles: her mother's dislike to her seemed to increase.

Miss Rabbit's insolence to and influence over Lady Sandford, were daily more apparent; and her brother was on the eve of a marriage which she feared would be productive of much misery. In tears and sorrow, the friends parted. Catherine remained stretched on the sofa, quite unequal to attend to any employment: her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth, her limbs trembled, and cold perspiration spread over her. She thought her hour was come; she tried to pray, but consciousness was denied her, and she fell into a deep swoon. How long she remained thus she knew not; her mother dis-

covered her, and in great alarm had sent for medical advice. Gradually she revived : but it was with a shadowy consciousness of the extent of her misery. Dark thoughts crossed her brain. She even wished Lady Rachel might die ;—that her marriage with Sandford might by any means be broken off. Then she loathed herself for the wicked thought, that one so young should be cut off. However, she will be happy :—who could fail of being happy, cheered by his love ?—No, — not love,—he loves her not,—he cannot love her with the intensity he once loved me. Such love as this is not felt twice. And the full extent of her misery seemed to burst upon her. No tears fell from her aching eyes : she was calm and resigned ; and that evening she descended into the drawing-room and joined the family party. Had there been any strangers there, they would have thought from her langour, and the extreme paleness of her complexion, that she was recovering from some severe illness.

CHAPTER XVII.

BEAUTEOUS summer, with all its thousand charms,—with all its sunny brightness and gay flowers—was now enchanting all eyes: save those, perhaps, of Catherine Selby. To her the recollection of past summers prevented her feeling much enjoyment from the present: yet she was grateful that she could thus be so constantly in the air; she felt that the soft summer breeze must be of service to her; and she tried to open her heart to all its soothing impressions.

The time for their return to Tonnington had now arrived; and as the carriage wound its way down the hill leading to the village, Catherine leant towards the window and beheld the fair scene lying before her in calm and beautiful repose, with the towering woods

of Harden Hall in the distance. She felt how completely, how entirely she was changed since the day she had looked on that fair scene, when returning with her grandmother to her father's home. She herself seemed the only object that was changed:—the same church, the same river, the same trees met her view;—but how altered all appeared in her eyes! At that day all had appeared bright and sunny; now (and she trembled to own it, even to herself) all the blessings she had still left—and they were many—seemed but as dust in comparison of those she had lost. Her mother anxiously watched her pale countenance, and silently pressed her hand. Neither of them dared trust themselves to speak: their hearts were too full to admit of words. Quickly did the carriage approach the house; and the faithful servants welcomed them with such warmth and affection, that Catherine experienced a degree of pleasure she had not known for a long time: the garden was in great beauty; and seizing hold of Susan's arm, she led her away, glad to escape for a few minutes; and in the bustle and confusion

of their first arrival, their absence was unperceived.

That night it was in vain that Catherine strove to sleep:—every word, every thought, every action of Sandford seemed to rise up before her with peculiar vividness. From the window of that very room how often had she watched him!—she had there read his letters containing the warm effusions of his love; there she had thought of him; and in that very chamber it was that she had first owned to herself how deeply she was attached to him. There were the books he had given her, the songs, the flower glasses, the pictures—all were there. Her retentive memory recalled the days of earliest childhood. Her first recollections were of him. Sadder scenes then arose before her mind, and the image of the sister she had lost rose up to add bitterness to these retrospections. She, too, had marked their childish love; and with the rapidity of thought Catherine was carried to the day of that sweet sister's death,—to that morning when, with the first break of dawn, Sandford had ridden over to inquire after the invalid, and

her father's sorrow at having to tell him the last sad scene had closed. Oh ! vain were the task to enumerate all these little events, which rose now with redoubled importance in the eyes of Catherine ! Vain were it to try to unravel the bitterness of that sad heart, as she lay worn out in body and mind ! Then, too, there was the feeling of shame at again appearing in the neighbourhood where her engagement had been so well known ;—the returning alone, neglected and despised ! With scalding tears did she bewail her fate ; and it was not till after many hours of acute mental suffering, that she was able so far to compose herself as to be able with the dawning light, to arise and seek consolation out of that Sacred Book, and from that holy source where alone it can be found.

The following day did not pass over without visits from some *friendly* neighbours, calling "*professedly*" to inquire after the family, but *purposely* to talk over Lord Sandford's marriage — an inexhaustible topic. Catherine studiously avoided all visitors : she was oc-

cupied in her room during the early part of the day, and in the garden afterwards ; so that she escaped all the inquisitive interrogatories of her friends on that day.

Susan remained with her mother, to see what information she could extract from any of their visitors relative to Harden Hall. That great preparations were being made to receive the bride and bridegroom was certain ; that it was a match which gave great satisfaction to the family, was not less so ; the lady had *money*, if she possessed no other attraction ; it was quite a mistake to suppose his lordship was so much better than his neighbours, for he had quite as great a regard to the main chance as any of them : these, and such like *good-natured* speeches were made over and over again, till Susan laughed to think how very differently these very people would have spoken of Lord Sandford, had her sister been the bride. It was news to the Selby family that the honeymoon was to be spent at Harden Hall,—and to Catherine it caused increased sorrow. Daily did she hear of waggon-loads of furniture—

of the most costly cabinets—of the rarest china, arriving at Harden Hall, sent from the *Brooke connexions*. Gradually was she accustoming herself to speak of the match before others; and so well did she act her part, that no one would have suspected the sorrow that lurked beneath. She had become hateful to herself: so different was this forced cheerfulness to that frankness and candour on which she had hitherto prided herself. A letter from Elizabeth announced that the *trousseau* was completed, and the wedding-day fixed,—that she was beginning to like her future sister; who was one of those young ladies (of which, added Elizabeth, there are but a few), that would be described as good-natured and kind; very quiet (*alias dull*), and whom it was impossible to dislike, she was so perfectly inoffensive: that Lady Rachel certainly appeared very fond of her brother, and they were always together. Lady Elizabeth also announced that it was her mother's intention to go to Harden Hall the following day, and to make preparations for the coming bride, and that she desired her to say, she hoped to

be able to find time to call on Mr. Selby. She herself regretted much that she was not to accompany her mother, as she would miss this opportunity of seeing Catherine.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Two or three days after this, as Catherine was alone in the drawing-room, the servant opened the door, and announced Lady Sandford. So deeply had Catherine been thinking of the future Lady Sandford, that her knees almost refused to support her, as she heard the name; but rising, with tolerable composure, she greeted Lady Sandford, and desired the servant to tell Mrs. Selby of her arrival. After affectionately kissing her,—after several pretty speeches about her and her friend Elizabeth, all which appeared little short of an insult to Catherine—she began to speak on *the* subject which occupied her night and day. She assured poor Catherine, that never had she seen so devoted a couple; that they were, apparently, quite wrapped up in one another; that she herself was delighted with her future

child ; and besides all advantages, she would certainly have a large fortune. Catherine stared with astonishment, and observed, that she had understood that Lady Rachel Hunt had several brothers.

“ Oh ! yes, so she has : but I mean to get round her old father—who, you know, my dear, is without exception the most disagreeable person I ever met with,—and make him give her something handsome. Then her connexions and relations are innumerable ; and, of course, having so many titled relatives, gives her the *entrée* of all the best houses in town : which will be another advantage to Sandford. Then her looks—of course you will wish to hear what she is like,—well, to tell the honest truth, she is no beauty, to my mind ; though some people consider her pretty. She is little, with rather good grey eyes, and hair reddish—I should call it, though Sandford thinks it the finest auburn. She is certainly ladylike : still I must call her plain ; and now, my dear Catherine, you cannot certainly accuse me of undue partiality.”

“ No, indeed, certainly not,” replied Miss

Selby; who saw very plainly that the match had been concocted between the two old dowagers, without caring in the least whether the parties suited each other or not. All this Catherine bore with patience, nay, with composure: but it was a more difficult task when she heard of the devotion of her faithless lover to another: and that other acknowledged by all to be her inferior in every thing but actual rank. It was a great distress to find from Lady Sandford, what before they had only heard by common report, that they meant to reside the whole winter at Harden Hall; and also that she and Elizabeth would be there a good deal. Catherine had, at least, hoped to have avoided meeting him so soon; now she felt it would be impossible. After this visit poor Catherine felt doubly wretched: yet wherefore she knew not. It was not that she entertained any ill-will towards Lady Sandford; though she was convinced, she had had a hand in breaking off her engagement—in ruining her happiness. Bitter disappointment had nearly soured her sweet temper, and often did the merest trifle irri-

tate her in the highest degree. She strove to conquer this irritability : it was not only distressing to others, but painfully so to herself. Gradually it wore off, and she became the same sweet creature she had ever been : though her youthful gaiety and liveliness were gone ! If the thought occurred to her, how much happiness might be restored to her were Lord Sandford's engagement with Lady Rachel to be broken off, she repelled the idea. She did not wish that any girl should undergo the suffering which was now her lot ; and she prayed for their happiness. Yes, on the day of their wedding, she prayed for them—for herself : she wandered about the house, unable to settle to anything ; her eyes were dimmed and bloodshot ; and so strange was her manner that Mrs. Selby half feared that her reason might give way. Towards evening she became calmer : she appeared at the dinner-table, and entered into general conversation, till suddenly Tiny burst into the room, crying out, “ I have seen Sandford, I have seen the bride ! The carriage is just gone by !”

Catherine's head fell back, her hands dropped by her side ! the knell of the last lurking hope, that, perhaps unknown to herself, had still lingered in her mind, was sounded. Her kind, considerate parents exerted themselves to promote conversation, in order to draw off attention from their daughter, who in a few minutes revived. Complaining, however, of headache, she left the room with her fond mother.

Never, perhaps, till that moment, had she known how intense was her love ! how Sandford was entwined with every fibre of her heart ! The idea of his passing their gate with another bride haunted her ; and it was not, till after administering a strong opiate, that Mrs. Selby had the satisfaction of seeing her more calm, and inclined to sleep.

Lady Brooke had been too much elated at her grand-daughter's making this *grand parti* of the season, not to hasten on matters as much as possible, for fear the gentleman should cool ; she thought, to use a homely proverb, "that it was better to strike the iron while hot." That evening saw Sandford with his bride in the hall of his fathers. It were

utterly impossible to attempt to describe the state of his feelings as he passed the Rectory ! It was only by the strongest effort that he was able to hide his emotion from her who was for ever his wife ; fortunately the shades of evening were thickening round, and the necessity at that minute of pulling up the window prevented his companion from perceiving his deathly paleness : he would not allow himself to reflect. The sight of his tenantry ranged on each side of the road to welcome him home, roused him ; but severely did he blame himself for returning to Harden Hall so soon, and he wished fervently as he passed the Rectory that they had gone abroad, or anywhere else. It was now too late : his path in life was decided ; and to go back impossible. That Lady Rachel loved him he did not doubt ; and solemnly did he vow to perform his duty by her, and to make her happy. This he felt was the only reparation now in his power to Catherine.

Before her marriage his wife had scarcely known what it was to love any one : her mother had died when she was too young

to feel her irreparable loss ; her father, harsh and stern, had rather repelled than encouraged any soft feelings. Her grandmother, worldly in the extreme, and her other connexions, entirely occupied with their own affairs, had had but little time to devote to the poor girl ; so that during the last month a new world had been opened to her : Sandford had sought her love, and it was given unreservedly. It was her first, her only love ; and if the delight of being free from the strictures her father was accustomed to put on her most innocent and trifling actions, mingled itself with her love of Sandford, it was but natural that it should be so : she anticipated a life of happiness ! She knew nothing of the Selbys ; excepting that one daughter was a great friend of Elizabeth's, and that some future day she hoped to make their acquaintance. Being shy and timid, and unaccustomed to any attention, she felt almost overwhelmed by her reception at her new home. It certainly was not without a feeling of pride that Lord Sandford handed her into the spacious saloon, elegantly and magnifi-

cently furnished to receive his bride, and imprinting a kiss on her brow, saluted her as mistress of Harden Hall, and all belonging thereto. Feeling fatigued with the many events of the day, at an early hour Lady Sandford sought her chamber ; she hardly yet comprehended the novelty of her situation.

On entering his dressing-room that evening, the young earl was surprised to see a packet, seemingly of letters, on the table ; but on examining the address, he doubted not whence they came. With trembling hands he untied the string, and all the numerous letters he had written to Catherine fell on the floor. Alarmed lest any one should enter and find him thus engaged, he hastily collected them together, determined to destroy them some future day : at the present moment, he could not make up his mind to do so. A box next attracted his attention ; it contained all the presents he had ever given to Catherine, even to the merest trifle : he groaned in bitterness of spirit—so much did these relics of past days recall—so keenly did he at that moment feel how shameful had been his conduct ! Not

a word was there of accusation or remonstrance ; not a line of Catherine's writing, save the direction, and this evidently traced with trembling hands. He seized it, and placed it amongst other papers in his pocket, retiring to rest, unhappy and wretched. Not so his little bride : she was perfectly contented, and was soon sleeping as soundly as an infant ! Their honeymoon was spent in the strictest seclusion and quiet ; and by Catherine, in endeavours to forget the past, and look forward to the future.

While they are thus disposed of, it is high time we should return to some of our other *dramatis personæ*.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONGST the many who appeared rejoiced at Lord Sandford's marriage, perhaps there was no one more so, than Lady Julia Read: but from strange motives. She had succeeded in poisoning the minds of Miss Rabbit and Mr. Hawkins against Miss Selby: or rather had strengthened their dislike of her so much, that they succeeded in preventing her marriage with Lord Sandford.

Like all people who are subject to temporary derangement, Lady Julia's dislike to Miss Selby's marriage had obtained such hold of her, that one day she was excited to an unusually violent attack of phrenzy by merely seeing her drive past with Lady Elizabeth Sandford. She vowed that Lord Sandford's marriage with Miss Selby should never take

place ; and most effectually had she prevented its doing so : but even in this world, it is rare that such wickedness as hers goes unpunished ; and the hour of retribution was fast approaching.

If there was a single being in the world towards whom it might be said Lady Julia entertained any degree of affection, it was to her nephew : that nephew she had not seen for months. He had grown weary of his dissipated life in town, and left it to find more exciting scenes—in racing and gambling. The last time she had heard of him, was upon his having won a large sum at Epsom. Instantly had the aunt written to beg the nephew to lend her some of his windfall. Great was the disgust of the said nephew ; who, however, forwarded the sum required, though, in his heart, he wished Lady Julia at Jericho. Not many days afterwards, while writing in her boudoir, she was surprised by hearing an unusual bustle and commotion on the staircase : always now in an anxious state of alarm, she immediately fancied that these

were the officers of justice in pursuit of her : but a footman, with horror and consternation depicted on his face, rushed into the room, exclaiming, “ My lady ! my lady ! master is killing himself—he is dying, my lady ! ”

“ Thankful,” to use her own words, “ that it was *no worse* ” she jumped up, exclaiming, “ Send for the doctor, send for the doctor ; where is your master ? ”

Disgusted at this behaviour, the man silently pointed to an open door of the study ; and Lady Julia, passing by him to leave the room, remarked, “ Why, Wilson, any one would think your master was dead, to look at you.” She passed on. On entering the study, a scene of such horror presented itself, that even her senses were frozen : her blood ran cold—her knees smote against one another. Stretched on the sofa, lay her husband !—his face colourless, his lips deadly pale, and blood streaming from his chest all over the couch. His eyes were closed, and, excepting that the blood flowed, he was, to all appearance, dead.

"Call Howell," said Lady Julia, as soon as she could articulate. Even at that moment, when the man whom, before the altar of God, she had sworn to love and cherish, lay weltering in his blood, she dared not approach him for fear of soiling her satin gown! Apparently he was unconscious of her presence. The surgeon now arrived, and on seeing the wound, declared that Mr. Read had not many hours to live. These words roused Lady Julia, in a slight degree, from a kind of stupor she had fallen into, and she wept. Yes! though all show of affection had long been extinguished between them, even if it had ever existed, she could not hear of his death thus solemnly announced by the medical man to be so near at hand, without some remorse, some pangs of conscience; and the heart-searching thought then struck her now perhaps it was all over, that she had not altogether fulfilled her duty towards him as she ought to have done. Then came the solemn reflection of what must be hereafter.

No one could give any account of how the

accident happened. A few hours before, Mr. Read had been seen to enter his study with a large bundle of papers, and was heard to lock the door. As one of the servants afterwards crossed the passage, he was startled by hearing the noise of a heavy body, as of some one falling, in the study. Rushing to the door, he found it locked, and some little time elapsed before they could force it open. Such a sight then met their eyes as spread consternation and sorrow: they beheld their master stretched on the floor, with the blood streaming from his chest; they raised him and placed him up on the couch, and sought Lady Julia. The rest of the tale is already told. That he had fallen by his own hand, there appeared little doubt. At that awful moment, when the soul was fast fleeting from its earthly tenement, the recollection that he had committed suicide horrified Lady Julia, more than the actual loss of a life which had never given her much enjoyment.

For two days Lady Julia remained as if paralyzed: as if riveted to that room. No
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entreaties could prevail on her to leave it: in vain Howell used threats and entreaties; in vain she made use of gentleness and persuasion, to remove her from this scene of death; Lady Julia positively refused to move. Wearied at length with her opposition, and having in the course of the day exhausted all those threats and inuendoes which she had never found to fail before, Howell gave her a severe blow, exclaiming, “When will you be taken to a mad-house? When shall I obtain my money? That cursed robbery of mine has turned your shallow brain! Come, rouse yourself, Lady Julia! Your husband is dead!—You do no good here!”

On hearing these cutting words, the eyes of the wretched lady relaxed their fixed stare, and she laughed wildly,—so wildly, indeed, that even Howell felt her blood curdle at the sound. But her object was not yet accomplished: and again threatening Lady Julia, she pushed her unfortunate mistress to the door; with violent language urging submission to her authority. A still wilder laugh was the only reply,

though the terrified lady hastened her steps towards the door.

A servant now approached who had witnessed all this cruel scene, to whom his mistress appeared quite deranged. Scarcely had he reached the door when Lady Julia rushed to him, and shrieking out, “Oh save me!—save me!—I will not remain with her!—Save me!” and she screamed with frantic violence.

With wonderful presence of mind, Howell turned towards the man, saying, “You see that my poor mistress is quite crazy: she has long been so. If you can doubt the evidence of your own senses, ask the other servants, who have been with her for years, whereas you are a fresh man,—they will confirm what I say.”

The man replied that there was little occasion for further evidence; that he could clearly see she was insane. “But stop, mistress,” he continued, turning to Howell, who was about to leave the room, “I heard you say strange things of yourself: you do not leave this room without a policeman being with you.”

At these words, Howell's whole frame shook with alarm. She knew not what to say : for a few minutes terror paralysed her brain, in general so fertile in expedients. Suddenly Lady Julia broke out again, screaming or rather shrieking, "She robbed me. She took the child ; she hid him. His father," and she laughed wildly. "Workhouse," she continued — "the boy," when she again relapsed into moody silence.

Quickly summoning other domestics, this man-servant desired them to send for a policeman ; saying, that from Howell's words, he thought strange things had happened with her connivance, and that at any rate her brutal treatment of Lady Julia required her instant dismissal. Howell's thoughts were in one terrible chaos at these words : hardly had she time to dwell on them, when she saw the policeman arrive.

Such an expression of withering hatred and scorn as crossed Howell's features when he made his appearance, the policeman had never before seen : no, not even amidst the hardened

wretches it had been his lot frequently to take into custody. Astonished at what he heard, and feeling certain that there must be something dreadful to be divulged, he despatched a servant to the next magistrate for a warrant to take up this woman. The servant was so astonished, that the policeman found himself obliged to repeat his orders in an authoritative tone, to ensure the man's obedience. Lady Julia had apparently relapsed into her former state : the fever in her brain seemed to have passed away. In matters of life and death, delays are dangerous, thought the worthy magistrate ; so he gave the warrant required immediately : it gave the policeman full power to take up Mary Howell, and to bring her before the proper authorities. With sullen determination and dogged resolution to brave the storm, Howell followed the man, secretly vowing that she still would have her revenge : far from being softened by what to another mind would have appeared almost the acmé of misfortune and degradation, it appeared to have turned all the little remaining milk of human kind-

ness that existed in her heart to gall and bitterness.

As the prison doors grated harshly on their hinges after her admittance, she felt roused to risk her very life : that appearing to her the only means of regaining her freedom. Then recurred the thought of the many articles of value that would be found in her trunks when searched : articles which she had stolen from Lady Julia. Having escaped detection in the first act of robbery of which she had been guilty, she had steeled her mind to all feelings of remorse, and had frequently with impunity been guilty of several most dishonest actions while living in Manchester Square. These thoughts almost maddened her: far from being softened by the fearful scenes she had just witnessed, it appeared that they had put the finishing stroke to her hardened and impenitent heart. Alas ! the place of her present abode was, perhaps, little fitted to conduce to better feelings. Loudly she protested her innocence ; loudly she protested the injustice of being committed to prison on

the accusation of a mad woman. It was all in vain: the narrow walls only re-echoed back her words; and wearied at length with the sound of her own voice, she became more tranquil. The fearful stillness of night in a prison is almost enough of itself to turn the brain; and several times did this wretched woman wish it might be so with her.

Not many hours after Howell's departure, the household in Manchester Square were again roused by screams from Lady Julia Reed. Two, and even three or four people were necessary to prevent her rushing from the room; and her violence increased to such a frightful degree as to make it necessary to apply immediately for further medical attendance. On the arrival of the physicians, they were unanimously agreed that, having a great previous tendency to delirium and insanity, the awful shock of seeing her husband a corpse, and weltering in his own blood—when she believed him well and in perfect health both of body and mind—had completely shat-

tered her intellect; and they immediately desired her brother to be sent for by express, that orders might be issued in his name for her immediate removal to a place of confinement.

We have before said that little communication passed between Lord Rawden and his sister; and, his private business having summoned him into the country the day after his brother-in-law's rash and wicked act, he had obeyed the summons and gone there, without once thinking of her, whom he regarded as a sister only by name. His absence at such a moment from town was looked upon as very extraordinary by the physicians; but they forebore all remarks, and placing keepers with Lady Julia, withdrew till her brother's arrival; not wishing without his sanction, to proceed to extreme measures.

That night was spent by Lady Julia in frantic efforts to tear herself away from those who held her in confinement; and it was an inexpressible relief to every one in that ill-fated household, when the following day Lord

Rawden's arrival was announced. Though a man of cold and calculating character, with feelings the very reverse of affectionate and warm-hearted ; still, the pitiable state in which he saw his sister — the fearful aberration of intellect under which she now laboured, her excitement, her frenzied screams, her bloodshot eyes—raised the latent spark of brotherly affection ; and he was so completely overcome that he groaned aloud. His own life and character had been irreproachable in a worldly point of view ; though the motives that had actuated him were not derived from that source which can alone make them acceptable to an Almighty God.

There could be no doubt as to the propriety of the measure recommended by the physicians, and he hastily assented to all their proposals ; he returned to his sister's apartment, to endeavour once more, if it were possible, by the most endearing epithets, to rouse her to consciousness. It was in vain : the empire of reason was for ever destroyed, and with a heavy sigh, he turned away from the

deeply-to-be-pitied maniac. Nor did his own heart acquit him of all blame: he had known that Mr. Read and his sister were running heedlessly into debt and difficulties, and never had once lifted his finger to save them, or to point out to them a better course; and though, in all probability, his advice would have been scorned and rejected, this did not exonerate him from blame. He gave way to these better feelings: he cherished them; and the awful events of that week proved an incalculable blessing to him. So true it is that what appears to us our greatest misfortune often proves a signal blessing. He laid their solemn precept to heart; and from that day forth he plainly perceived that religious principle can alone form a barrier to worldly ambition—to criminal coldness and indifference to our nearest relations,—can alone “bring a man peace at the last.”

That evening saw the proud, the unbending Lady Julia, far away from all her usual haunts: immured in a whitewashed room; her hands in irons; with two keepers guarding

her ; and towards evening, sleeping under the influence of strong opiates, on a couch, whose extreme cleanliness formed its only recommendation. In this *room*, stripped of all this world holds dear, of all that she herself had ever valued, now lay this unfortunate, this misguided and erring woman. It was, indeed, an awful change !—to be taken from a house literally teeming with costly luxuries of every description ; from a home where wealth and refined art had lavished all their fascinations — where troops of menials were in daily attendance to obey the slightest wish of either master or mistress !—to be taken from this, from all that had been their owner's pride and delight, to a place of confinement, was truly an awful instance of the certainty with which even in this life, wickedness reaps its own deserts. Yes, it was mercifully ordained that Lady Julia should remain ignorant of all this : that her mind should, at least for a time, be steeped in forgetfulness ; or that she should cease to remember the fearful scene,

that had completely destroyed her reasoning powers.

The opiates produced lethargy, and she remained motionless and still.

CHAPTER XX.

As day after day wore away, and Howell found that all her bribes were unsuccessful in gaining the assistance of the turnkey to effect her escape, she relapsed into a moody obstinate silence ; and for three days spoke not a word. On the morning of the fourth day, as she sat alone in her miserable cell, the sound of a tolling bell struck upon her ear ; and as its dull, heavy sound was repeated, she trembled, her lips quivered, and falling on her knees, she exclaimed, "Great God, have mercy on me !" Years had elapsed since a prayer had passed her lips ; now her heart seemed softened, and her tears flowed freely. Her mind appeared to her a perfect chaos : all seemed dark confusion, terror, and horror. But the ice had been broken, and as the time for the chaplain's visit drew nigh, she became anxious for his

arrival. Hitherto she had maintained an obdurate silence when he was with her ; now the state of her feelings was changed : she heard his well-known step with joy ; though deep shame mingled with this, to her, strange feeling. The chaplain was one of those mild, benevolent old men, whose whole lives are devoted to benefiting others : his manner was courteous and soothing to all alike ; and many were the blessings showered upon his aged head, as he went on his errand of mercy through the different wards.

On opening Mary Howell's door, he was struck with the alteration of her appearance and manner : that look of proud defiance and utter scorn which had hitherto greeted him, was now changed for downcast looks of penitent shame. She could not speak ; her usual cutting remarks died on her lips, and she remained silent.

The good old man approaching her mildly, said, "He trusted from that day to date an improvement in the state of her mind." He spoke of love, of mercy, of justice, of another

world, of a life beyond the grave ; and urged her to confess what robbery it was she had committed. Great was the struggle between her evil inclinations and the openings of good feeling which had that day risen in her breast; she hesitated, hung her head in shame, and answered not a word ; till, as the chaplain was about to leave the cell, she said, "To-morrow, I will tell you all!"

This was enough; and he left her, after praying that she might be brought to a sense of her guilt, and saved through the all-sufficient blood of a crucified Redeemer. But evil habits of long standing are not so easy to be overcome ; and after this excellent man had left her, Howell felt all her desire of revenge returning : she began to repent the promise she had given. One thing, she muttered to herself, at least affords me some pleasure ; and that is that Miss Selby for whose *good* (as she perversely argued) I have suffered so much, is even as unhappy as myself : this she had previously ascertained. But it is unnecessary that we should follow the work-

ings of this wretched woman's mind. Suffice it to say, that the following day she confessed everything to the chaplain: she recapitulated the whole affair. Great was the horror and dismay expressed by her patient listener at such a tale of ingratitude, deceit, and fraud; and those likewise of the blackest dye. To find that crimes, such as robbery of papers, &c. which he conceived had been confined exclusively to the most violent and abandoned of the human species—to find that such acts had been, not only connived at, but planned, by one, and *that* a woman, moving in the highest circles, perfectly electrified the worthy chaplain: the ostensible end to be gained, that of concocting a match between Mr. Read and Miss Selby, seemed so little worthy of such violent measures. Again, the concealing of the child he looked upon as the most heartless thing that had ever been promulgated to him. He asked Howell in a stern voice, “Did your scheme succeed?—did Mr. Read marry Miss Selby?”

“No,” she exclaimed; “they did not suc-

ceed : she would not marry him ; her thoughts were fixed elsewhere. But," continued the wretched woman, " I have gained one of our ends: I have taken away her affianced lord ! her first and only love have I given to another ! But oh ! the child :" she continued, " let me see him ! let me hear from his own lips that he forgives me all the injuries I have done him. Let me see him ! He is in the work-house at my native village, as an orphan boy, under the name of Stratton ! Oh ! let me see him ! "

The chaplain turned with renewed earnestness towards her ; who the moment before he had beheld with loathing, on account of her speech about Miss Selby. But her tale of guilt and of wasted talents was over : she had divulged the whole affair, and appeared to foresee that her sentence would in all probability be severe. That the child must be at once identified, and brought publicly before the world, was instantly determined by the chaplain ; and he promised the now penitent woman to use all his endeavours to obtain

intelligence of him, and to bring him to her if possible. He took down the address, resolving that no time should be lost in seeing after this most ill-used youth.

This assurance seemed to tranquillise Howell a little. With earnestness and fervour did the reverend divine offer up his prayers with her. He strove by every means in his power to work on her feelings; and as he daily renewed his visits, he had the happiness of seeing her listen with increasing willingness to the message of heavenly mercy which he had to proclaim. Gradually did the early impressions of religion, which had been instilled into her when a child, resume their power; and ere a fortnight elapsed, his efforts were rewarded by seeing her deeply penitent.

During this time her mind dwelt frequently on the situation of the child, and on the obscurity and poverty to which she had so heartlessly consigned it. The money she had extorted by using his name to Lady Julia was now become abhorrent to her. She had

been given to understand she would stand at the bar for her trial, on the plea of having stolen various articles from Lady Julia, and having most grossly ill-used her. With bitter tears she confessed the justness of this accusation, and humbly prayed to be kept from further wickedness.

In a few days, after she had first mentioned Mr. Read's son to the chaplain, she was surprised at hearing his well-known step at a much earlier hour than usual. Hope rose in her breast, that he might have succeeded in obtaining the child; and she eagerly scanned his countenance as he entered the door: but there was little in it to re-assure her hopes and wishes; and she feared he had failed in discovering him.

Her doubts were soon resolved when he replied to her speaking looks, that the child was still where she had placed him.

“God be praised! and may I see him?”

“Alas!” he continued, “I fear not. At present there is little probability of your doing so. But calm yourself, Howell, for you have

need of firmness to hear what I am now going to relate to you."

In a subdued mild voice he related, that the friend whom he had deputed to seek the child had hastened from town immediately; that the circumstance was made known to him; that he had sought the unhappy boy, whom he had discovered in a sick ward, surrounded by others, all suffering from the same fearful disease under which he himself was labouring—small-pox.

The miserable woman gave a groan of despair, and almost swooned away: she made a sign, however, to her kind informer to proceed, which he did; saying that young Stratton, as he was called at the poor house, or Read, had got the disease in its most malignant form; that he was evidently fast sinking under it,—frightfully emaciated and reduced, and highly delirious: though at times when the pastor of the parish visited him, and mildly read prayers to him, he appeared calmer, and joining his thin tapering hands together, seemed to pray.

Bitterly did Howell weep at this recital, and eagerly again she inquired whether there was no hope. Deeply as it grieved Mr. Alban to deprive one in so fearful a situation of any comfort, still he considered it his duty positively to assure her that there was none ; and that even by that time the soul of him she had so deeply injured was in all probability released from worldly pain and sorrow—a pure and beatified spirit : then kneeling at her side, Mr. Alban prayed with her, and for her, that she might see the hand of God in this afflicting dispensation, and uncomplainedly submit to His will.

After a little more conversation he withdrew ; promising to see her again that evening if he heard anything further from the work-house. It added not a little to Howell's remorse that Mr. Read, the father, was on the Continent, she knew not where ; as it prevented Mr. Alban from appealing to him to protect his child. She now saw that the "wages of sin is death," and that the straight path of duty once infringed—once deviated from—is

with great difficulty, if ever, regained. She could now trace her own fall entirely to inordinate vanity; to thinking herself wiser than other people, and, contrary to their advice, seeking in the metropolis to "*better herself*:" the steps from self-will to obstinacy, from obstinacy to deceit, from deceit to lying and robbery were gradual, and at the time scarcely heeded; but she now saw with vividness every aggravating circumstance of her past life, and whatever her future fate might be, felt sure that it was ordained for her good.

It was late that night when Mr. Alban again appeared to inform Howell that the child was no more: at an early hour that day he had been taken by his merciful Father from a world which to him had caused so little pleasure. No complaint escaped from her as she thus heard her last hopes destroyed: but her remorse was poignant. Mr. Alban, earnestly commanding her to the care of her Maker,—with deep commiseration at having thus added intensity to the anguish of one now so keenly alive to the wickedness of her past life—took his leave.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE sensation of horror and dismay excited in the *beau monde* at the death of Mr. Read by his own hand, was greatly increased by the report that Lady Julia Read had been so overcome on seeing her lifeless husband, that the shock produced insanity; and that she was so outrageously violent as to make it necessary for her to be most closely guarded: these two facts formed, however, but a nine days' wonder; and, immersed in gaiety and dissipation, the greater number of people laid not the serious warning to heart.

The day for Howell's trial had now arrived. Under the fostering care of Mr. Alban she had been daily brought to a happier state of mind,—to a deeper repentance. She resolved not to employ counsel; and determined to

confess her guilt of the various robberies ascribed to her. She even refused to engage a celebrated lawyer of the day, who, *after* that his clients have confessed to him their guilt, works himself up into such a pitch of indignation against the accusers, and concern for the accused, as to shed tears—to prove his earnestness in advocating the cause of his client, and persuade the jury of the innocence of one who an hour before had confessed to him his guilt!

No, Howell now felt resigned to her fate. One thing to her credit should be known: when she first made a confession to the chaplain, she had implicated Miss Selby as being aware of the existence of the wife and child; but now that she was roused to better feelings, it smote her deeply to think of thus defaming the character of one who had never done her any injury—who had never even been seen by her; and she begged the chaplain to erase the false and malignant words, so that Miss Selby's name might not appear at all during the trial. Would it not, indeed, have brought Mr. Selby's

grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, to have heard the name of his daughter coupled in any way, at this time, with that of such a wretch?

The trial had not proceeded far, and all were hushed in breathless attention, when a commotion was heard at the further end of the court. After ordering silence, the judge demanded what was the cause of the disturbance; when a thin, tall, rather fine-looking old man,—his head bowed on his chest, slowly rose up, saying, “I am Mary Howell’s father.”

Struck by his manner, and the deep sorrow expressed in his countenance, the counsel paused. The old man approached the prisoner. “My child,” he demanded, “are you guilty of having robbed Lady Julia of so many articles? Have you committed this dreadful crime?”

His voice was low and weak, and he leaned towards her, as if his very life depended on her answer. Years had passed since she had gazed on that now aged form, and heard the tones of that feeling voice. Her lips trembled; her frame shook convulsively; she could not articulate: vain were her efforts to make her-

self heard: at length, with desperation, she faintly said, "*I am guilty.*"

In the eyes of that aged man, the court seemed turned into a hell: the heated faces around him appeared like the imagination of a fevered dream. He caught hold of the railing for support, and said,—

" My child!—my dear child! I forgive you all the sorrow you have caused me. If by the law you are condemned to leave your native land;" and a convulsive tremor shook his voice,—“remember you have a father's forgiveness—a father's prayers: remember, again, those precepts that were taught you as a child. And now, farewell: kiss me, kiss me, oh, my daughter! and receive a father's parting blessing,—a father's full pardon. May God Almighty forgive you!"

Thick falling tears prevented him saying more; and, perhaps, there was not one in that crowded court, down whose cheeks the tears did not silently flow.

Gradually recovering himself, the broken-hearted old man quitted the court—to him a

scene of unutterable anguish—and the trial proceeded.

After all the evidence had been given on both sides, and the judge had summed up the whole, the jury pronounced a verdict of guilty, and sentence of *transportation* was pronounced upon Mary Howell.

Howell heard the sentence with composure : her sole wish now was to be released from this world, where she had worked so much evil ; and she silently prayed that her repentance might be accepted.

Perhaps, after her shameful conduct to the unfortunate child, there was no part of her life which caused Howell so much remorse, and such bitter sorrow when the hour for her leaving England drew nigh, as that of having by her cruelty and harshness reduced Lady Julia Read to her present deplorable state. Often did she entreat the chaplain, who was unremitting in his attentions to her, to add his prayers to hers, that Lady Julia might yet be restored to the use of her senses though her intellect appeared quite paralysed.

The convict-ship lay at anchor off the hulk; and amidst many others,—some, indeed, who were no doubt penitent, others fearfully hardened,—did Mary Howell ascend into the vessel that was to transport her away for many years from all civilised society, and convey her to the horrors of a penal settlement. Her pale cheek and livid lips bespoke deep remorse, and shame unutterable. Indefatigable to the last, Mr. Alban was there, breathing words of comfort and hopes of a better world to those who felt, indeed, but little remaining to them in this.

The last parting was over, and the gallant vessel, with its fearful cargo of broken hearts, was quickly borne away by the freshening breeze. Fearful, indeed, would be the catalogue were all the thoughts of these condemned wretches known to the world: some hardened in vice and depravity; others lured from the right path at their entrance into life, and thus in early youth, when the strongest impressions are made, brought into contact with vice in all its deformity!

But is this the way to bring about a moral

reformation?—to lessen the awful amount of crime in the country? Oh! no, far other means are needed: let them not be sent as exiles to distant shores, without chaplains, without churches being prepared for their use before their arrival; without every means being taken during the long voyage to bring them to a sense of their depravity, of their need of repentance! God is gracious, and let man humbly imitate his distinguishing attribute of mercy. Let us as individuals, and as a nation, strive to arrest the *progress* of vice and irreligion among all classes; let us strive to ameliorate the condition of the lower classes: for be it known that *actual want* has caused more fearful crimes, has brought more human beings to suffer the extreme penalty of the law, than any other cause whatever.

Fearful as the punishment inflicted on Howell by a human tribunal undoubtedly was, it was far less awful than that decreed to Lady Julia by a still higher Power. In the first case time was given for repentance; in the latter—oh! dreadful thought—no ray of

reason had as yet dawned upon this benighted soul ! her violent screams and distortions had been succeeded by utter silence—perfect idiotcy ! Thus ended all those hopes, all those crooked machinations to obtain lucre and deceive the world, which had been so fearfully at work in the breasts of both these females, and involved them both in such intense disgrace.

Well, indeed, may our readers exclaim, “that the love of money was indeed to them the root of all evil.” Yes, you who are lured from the direct paths of virtue, honesty, and truth, think on these things ! Remember, that one at least of these women had received a religious education, and for the earlier part of her life lived virtuously and respectably. Do you, who live in princely mansions, with troops of servants attending upon you —do you reflect how incumbent it is on you to see what manner of life they lead ; and recollect that, in proportion as you do your duty by them, and set them a good example, they are likely to be influenced by

your conduct and be faithful to you. Who can doubt, but that one of the principal causes of the frightful increase of crime and licentiousness in this country, is the neglect, the haughtiness, with which too many, who ought to know better, treat their domestics ? With little or no education, they are expected to be faultless. Let their superiors in rank look at home, and see whether they have any right to expect in others a higher standard of merit than they can boast of possessing themselves. May those of Lady Julia's rank, who are tempted to peruse this, consider into what fearful *extravagance* the besetting sin of these days may lead them ; and take warning from her fate of the evils caused by a lavish expenditure beyond what their income admits.

Scarcely aware where the heir-at-law was to be found, the late Mr. Read's executor sent off an express to Paris ; thinking that gay metropolis was in all probability his abode. It was so ; and the young man was frantic at hearing of his complete ruin : bitterly he lamented

his fate in having quitted his uncle — bitterly did he grieve at this blight of all his future hopes and prospects ; and for a time he was reduced to sullen despair. But it will be some consolation to our readers, after all the harrowing scenes through which they have recently passed, to know, that he, the prime cause of them all, was at length brought to a better state of mind : he retired from that gay vortex of society in which he had hitherto moved, and strove, not to banish reflection, as formerly, but to encourage and foster every gleam of improvement perceptible to himself. The sneers, the derision of his worthless companions passed unheeded,—they had lost their influence : he had felt the wretchedness to which his intimacy with such men had led him, and steadily refused to associate any longer with them. The thought of all that his wife and child had undergone, afflicted him indeed with deep remorse, and sorrow : but it also caused an amendment of life ; and in the altered character in which he now appears, immersed in country pursuits, studiously pro-

moting the welfare of all around him, our readers would with difficulty recognise the gay and fashionable spendthrift,—he who was called *the nephew, par excellence.*

CHAPTER XXII.

GREAT was the surprise and disgust of the family at Tonnington Rectory when the accounts of all that had happened in Manchester Square reached them. Great was Catherine's horror as she proceeded a little way in reading an account of the trial; and a deep feeling of thankfulness spread over her that she had escaped from falling into such terrible hands: but that she should have been the cause, however unintentionally, and unknown to herself, of the commission of such crimes, was dreadful. It was more evident to her than ever, that Lady Julia's partiality arose only from an idea that she might eventually become possessed of considerable property. Her abhorrence and dislike to Mr. Augustus

Read were increased tenfold,—she regarded him as the murderer of his wife and child: a cool, calculating villain, who had hoped that her money would have released him from his pecuniary difficulties. It afforded her some degree of consolation that he had left the country,—that she should, in all probability, never again see him. But what had made these two women so virulent against her she could not divine: she trusted that the report was true that both of them had been previously deranged. Fortunately, Catherine's eyes had not been painfully opened to what had been passing behind the scenes at the time when she was perfectly happy,—happier far than she imagined would ever be her lot again in this world; and she turned with loathing mingled with pity from the contemplation of Lady Julia's and Howell's fate.

Gentle reader, you may perhaps like to know that Miss Selby has again met Lord Sandford. Yes! after the wedding had

elapsed some time, Mrs. Selby paid her visit to the bride at Harden Hall: she did it more to please her daughter than herself. Catherine did not wish to stand in the way of the same easy intercourse between her brothers and sisters and the family at Harden Hall, as formerly existed; and now that they had fixed themselves in the neighbourhood, the two families must necessarily be thrown together.

The first time that Lord Sandford and Catherine met was at a school feast given in the neighbourhood, to which Catherine had been particularly invited. Numerous were the remarks about the young bride at Harden Hall; and Catherine had to answer them all, and appear interested, when every word that was uttered was a dagger to her heart: so deeply did she feel his desertion of her. The fête was nearly over, and Catherine had hoped to have escaped that day without speaking to Lord Sandford, when on looking down the lawn, she perceived him approaching

with his wife on his arm, and Mr. Hawkins close by his side. It was with difficulty that our poor heroine kept up the conversation, so quickly did her heart beat; and her voice became thick with emotion: fortunately, however, her agitation was not perceived. As they approached, all crowded around to welcome the young earl, who was very popular; and also to be introduced to his bride, who appeared terrified to death, and ready to sink into the earth at receiving such unusual attentions. Her reception of them was cold and ungracious. Lord Sandford's colour heightened as he turned towards Catherine, and he, too, became nervous; hiding it, however, under an off-hand manner, and hurriedly asking after Mr. and Mrs. Selby. To Catherine his emotion was perceptible: it displayed itself also by extreme paleness. By great exertion she was enabled to answer him with composure, and passed on to her father, who was coming toward her. Many were

the trials of this kind that she had to endure; for each time that they met she saw those attentions lavished on another, which certainly of right belonged to her: it drove her nearly distracted. All she suffered was unknown, even to her nearest and dearest relations: the fire which burned within her, she concealed under a mask of even more gaiety and cheerfulness than she had ever shown: she played, she sang, she danced with the gayest; and if at times such a sense of misery and disappointment oppressed her, as almost to take away the power of exertion, she rallied herself; it was only when alone, or very rarely with her mother, that any symptoms of weakness were indulged in. Often did she rise, after a restless night, when light fancy in the intervals of sleep had woven bright dreams of happiness,—of that home in which she had hoped to have passed such a life of bliss with Sandford at her side, bright and smiling, loving her as in days of yore: to

wake from such dreams as these, and to find him the husband of another, was indeed a sore trial. She had been again to Harden Hall; she had seen his little pale bride fill the place that was to have been hers. It was only natural that as a *woman* she should feel some degree of pleasure in appearing happy and gay when in Lord Sandford's company; and that her pride should be gratified by thus mortifying a little, him who had not scrupled to injure her irreparably. His presence was to her a signal to laugh and talk as in those days when he had admired her.

At first her health nearly sank under these continual efforts; but she was wonderfully supported, and meekly kissed that hand, which had thought fit thus severely to try her.

It is mercifully ordained that time should soften all calamities: some few years passed away, and Catherine was accustomed continually to see Lord and Lady Sandford together. That they were happy, according to the

common acceptation of the term, is true ; but their happiness was very unlike what Catherine would have considered perfect, had she been permitted to marry the man of her choice ; and may very aptly be called a state of quiescent happiness. Mr. Hawkins, residing constantly with the domestic couple, appeared to have become a sort of second conscience to the noble lord : so indispensable was his presence to Sandford's peace of mind.

Great is the astonishment expressed by her friends that Miss Selby is still unmarried ; they know not how long a time must elapse before so strong an attachment as she felt is got over—even if ever it should be the case : it was woven into every thought and feeling ; her love had “grown with her growth,” and time alone can eradicate such strong impressions.

As if even this unpretending tale might be permitted to add one testimony more to the many proofs of the inexpediency, not to say

sinfulness, of “doing evil that good may come,” Catherine did eventually fulfil Lady Julia’s predictions, by becoming a considerable heiress. Her aunts left her all they possessed; so that Lord Sandford, after having bartered his happiness for gold, lived to see that girl, whose only defect in his eyes had been the want of money, become possessed of so large a fortune, that Lady Rachel Hunt’s 30,000*l.* dwindled in comparison to a mere pittance. Catherine Selby still remained at Tonnington, a blessing to all around her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THOUGH on the first announcement of Lord Sandford's marriage, his *soi-disant* friend Mr. Hawkins had professed much pleasure at an event, which was in fact a bitter disappointment to him; yet, from the facility with which he had gained the principal object of his ambition, namely, the prevention of any intercourse with Miss Selby, he had entertained the most ardent hopes that his own personal influence would have prevented Lord Sandford from feeling the want of a more intimate bond of union. Too late he discovered his mistake: he discovered that his patron, accustomed as he had always been to confide in the judgment of others, no sooner found himself deprived of Miss Selby's judicious decisiveness, of her clear-sighted

opinion on all subjects, than, failing to find any resource within himself, he sought it in others very possibly less capable of imparting to him that firmness in which he was so lamentably deficient. Very few months, however, after the marriage had taken place, sufficed to show Mr. Hawkins that for the future the *wife* would be considered before the *chaplain*. In one respect, he retained over his lordship an important hold; and that was derived from the outward zeal and fervour with which he performed all religious duties: penances and fasts were by him rigidly observed. His conversation also was pretty generally confined to serious subjects. Lord Sandford was not likely to observe unmoved the worn and emaciated appearance of his friend. Having witnessed the lamentable effects of these oft-recurring fasts, he once or twice urged Hawkins not to tax his strength too severely: but a religion of outward observances, whose chief aim is to

make its votaries appear in the eyes of the world abstracted from all earthly cares; a religion that professes to heal all wounds by human means, was rapidly gaining ground in the heart of this misguided young man.

There is something peculiarly attractive to the human mind, in the doctrine that it is in our power to effect by our own works the salvation of our immortal souls; or if not altogether to ascribe the entire merit of working out our own salvation to our own performances, yet that these observances most certainly contribute very largely to this important object.

Hawkins lent himself to this seducing doctrine. Scarcely did he *allow* to himself how much merit he attached to the morning vigil; to the Latin prayers that were hurriedly repeated every day; to the observance of every saint's day. He even went so far as to omit the day of the month, had he occasion to indite an epistle to any of his friends on

a holy day, and substitute instead thereof the name of the saint that marked the day ; thereby informing them that he had not overlooked it himself : perhaps as a tacit reproof to those whom he suspected had not observed the same.

The effect of this strictness and tendency to one point, gave him an extraordinary influence over both Lord and Lady Sandford. He assumed so much superiority over them, as the delegated minister of the Most High, that in all their affairs he was consulted ; and each day saw them, after confession, seek absolution of him of whom both entertained a secret fear. Although in many respects admitting the superiority of the Popish over the Reformed Church, the doctrine of transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope, still Mr. Hawkins hesitated to declare himself a Papist. He felt, indeed, that this was the only honourable course he could pursue ; yet, for the present, he put off the evil

day. He was perplexed by conflicting doubts: at times the superiority of the Reformed Church struck him forcibly; then, again, some bewitching doctrine was brought before his eye; some singular instance of undoubted zeal was shown by one of his friends, a rigid Papist. Bewildered, therefore, and harassed by these distressing doubts, his mind became a perfect chaos. None of these short-comings were known to either Lord or Lady Sandford. They had remarked that Mr. Hawkins had grown silent and reserved, and his abstracted air led them frequently to suspect that something weighed upon his mind, and that he was ill at rest; but to neither of them did it ever occur to inquire into the cause of this change. He had given it as his decided opinion that a priest should be left isolated from the rest of the inhabitants of Harden Hall; and in this he was gratified. There was in his manner so much of that “pride that apes humility,” that he was not deemed by visitors

very agreeable ; yet no one person ever remained more than a few days in his company, without feeling that he was obtaining over them a very considerable degree of influence. Imperceptibly, they began to consult him on indifferent subjects, and gradually he was enabled, by his knowledge of the human heart, by his apparent openness, to draw from them any information he might be desirous of obtaining. It was a youthful error on the part of his lordship, to allow Mr. Hawkins to continue an inmate of his house after his marriage ; and to have permitted him to exercise the same domineering manner over him that he had acquired in the first days of their intimacy.

There is, however, one of our acquaintance, Lady Elizabeth, who never could conquer her dislike to Mr. Hawkins. Civil she was to him whenever they met ; but it was the calm, distant civility of one determined not to be dictated to, or to give way in the slightest

degree to what she considered as a most unjustifiable spirit of domination. Never would she allow him to see any letters, that she had either received or written : she openly said she considered it a breach of confidence; and when he urged that her brother and his wife submitted all their correspondence to his inspection, fearful of saying too much, she begged the subject might be for ever dropped. Disgusted and sickened at this further confirmation of her worst suspicions, she felt that those to whom she was the most attached, and who were bound to her by the nearest ties, stood, indeed, on the edge of a fearful precipice. Of a more inquiring mind than Lord Sandford, she had read and thought much upon all the subjects now so generally discussed in society; and entertained the strongest aversion to anything that tended to reconcile the forever irreconcilable doctrines of the Romish church with the tenets of that established

in this country. The frequent hints she had heard thrown out against Mr. Hawkins on this score, confirmed her more and more in this feeling : time alone, she felt, could prove whether her fears and apprehensions were well founded or needless.

Time alone could prove to Lord Sandford the disinterested love of his sister ; in beautiful contrast to the selfish, hypocritical friendship professed by one who used his sacred character merely as a cloak to cover worldly ambition.

CHAPTER XXIV.

How unwilling are we all to resign hope ! How fondly do we cling to the shadow when the substance is for ever fled ! Catherine Selby had imagined that all feeling of love, all tenderness towards Lord Sandford was conquered ; and that she now merely regarded him as a common acquaintance. But can this ever be so ? Can one who has shared every thought,—who has called forth the

“ Heart’s first affections — ”

can he ever sink to the level of the crowd, and cease to have in the eyes of the once-loved object any merit above his comrades ? No,—this is impossible. Woman’s love, once bestowed, is never wholly obliterated : the feeling, in a great measure, may be restrained ;

may be effaced, nay, even subdued ; may be succeeded by a calmer love : but no second attachment has—it cannot have—the trustfulness of a first love. No after affection can possess the intoxicating delirium of the first : then, other cares and other thoughts mingle their alloy ; and though such love may be more conducive to happiness, as the world at present exists, it wants that purity, that *devouement*, which gives *le premier amour* its charm.

Catherine had schooled herself, as she imagined, to submission to her fate : she had seen Lord Sandford and his wife repeatedly ; yet the moment in which she first beheld their most engaging little infant, was one of such intense bitterness, that it was with difficulty she mastered her overpowering emotion. It was not that she was taken by surprise ; but it was that in the large, lustrous eyes of this child she saw her former devoted lover again before her. With this exception, her manner was perfectly composed when in Lord Sand-

ford's company : far more so than his own ; which betrayed, by his frequently changing colour and hurried speech, feelings that he would gladly have stifled. In her first moments of sorrow, Catherine had pictured herself able to become the intimate friend of Lady Sandford ; but she soon found that her friendship was not desired : she soon discovered that the more rarely she was thrown into her society the more agreeable it would be to both parties ; therefore, as much as lay in her power, she studiously avoided them. Though amiable and kind, Lady Sandford did not particularly relish the being in company with Miss Selby ; who so far eclipsed her in outward charms, and whose vivacity and sprightliness were made more apparent by the contrast of her own dullness and insipidity : for she was too humble-minded to think of comparing herself with one whom she felt so much to be her superior.

CHAPTER XXV.

“Oh, well do I remember
That lone, but lovely hour,
When the stars had met,
And the dews had wet
Each gently-closing flower ;
And the moonlit trees
Waved in the breeze
Above the sleeping deer ;
And we fondly strayed
Through the greenwood shade,
In the spring time of the year.”

OLD SONG.

THESE lines recurred to Catherine’s mind as she wandered one summer’s afternoon through the village of Tonnington. Mechanically she found herself, as it were, strolling along what had been formerly Lord Sandford’s favourite

walk ; and her thoughts were carried back to early days. The fragrant breeze that floated past, cooled and refreshed her exhausted frame : sickness and death had been busy in her once happy home ; and throwing herself on the turf, near a wide-spreading oak, her overcharged heart found relief in a flood of tears. She had quitted the bedside of a little brother for a few moments : in the course of the previous month, she had seen cut off by the smallpox—that most malignant disease, that scourge of the human race,—one whom she had fondly hoped would have been spared to them for years. Her brother—her noble, high-minded brother Arthur—had fallen a victim to this fatal malady. In him she had lost one who had always proved himself her most devoted friend ; and in the first moments of this bitter affliction, she almost trembled for life and reason. But rousing herself, she remembered those blessed words of holy comfort, “ I will never leave thee nor

forsake thee ;" and she remembered also, that now he was taken away, she must devote herself more particularly to comfort and console her beloved father and mother. This was no difficult task : for every moment that they lived did but endear these best, and now deeply-sorrowing parents more and more to their fond children ; and the tender smile with which her mother invariably greeted her, amply repaid Catherine for every exertion. This evening Mrs. Selby had urged Catherine to leave the chamber of her sick brother ; and had besought her to consider now what was necessary for her own health ; not to tax her strength too severely. The coolness of the air refreshed her drooping spirits ; and, after a short stroll, she returned to the Rectory. At the door she was greeted with the welcome intelligence that her brother was asleep, and that the physician had pronounced him out of danger.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN conclusion, the Editor begs to remark, that some years have passed away since the preceding pages were penned: various and untoward have been the events which have thus long delayed their publication. Serious and continued illness so completely incapacitated the Author from revising and correcting this work, that the Editor solicits the indulgence of a generous public towards the errors which undoubtedly exist. The Author had looked forward to the past Spring as the latest time to which the publication would have been postponed; but the same fatality which prevented its appearing a few years ago, again occurred. The expectations of the Author were a second time disappointed—he was prostrate on the bed of sickness.

But the Editor trusts to the truth of the old proverb, "that every dog has his day;" and his friend, having begun his touching tale in sickness and sorrow, he trusts will conclude with such a brilliant sunshine as to produce an abundant harvest.

All imperfections that may be discovered, the Editor trusts will be fairly balanced against the merits of the work. He must confess that the objections which have been made to him,—namely, the possibility of giving offence by describing, as very common, such a character as that of Lord Sandford, and as one that is met with every day,—far from being any censure, is in his eyes (perhaps he is partial) the greatest compliment that could be paid to this character; as it incontestibly proves how general such want of firmness is, and what misery is entailed on all connected with a weak and wavering man, incapable of acting on any occasion with decision. Again, some friends have en-

deavoured to impress him with the conviction that the other characters are over-drawn: but let them look around them, not on the polished surface of society, but let them dive deep into the motives and actions of their neighbours—to say nothing of weighing well their own,—and they will then discover that no tale of fiction conceived by the boldest imagination can equal the tragedy or romance of real life. Let travellers say what they please about the coldness of English blood; we need scarcely read one of Dickens's fearfully-exciting, because so truthfully written, tales, to assure us that there are under this calm exterior, too often, passions as fierce, as deeply agitating as those that appear on all occasions in the inhabitants of the south: not unfrequently more lasting, from their concentration on one point, and from being concealed under a phlegmatic exterior. If the readers of "Harden Hall" conceive Lady Julia Read's character to be

quite *outréée*, in their case we can only say that

“Ignorance is bliss ;”

and that their lot in life is indeed a happy one, whose only knowledge of evil is drawn from books. It is a hopeless task to aim at removing all objections, and therefore not attempted by the Editor ; who begs leave, on the part of the Author, to thank all who may think this work worthy of perusal, and to entreat that they will recommend it to all their friends and acquaintances.

Should this tale, which is founded on fact, preserve one youthful female heart from the misery which is caused by a faithless lover ; or prove to men how execrable such conduct is felt by all to be, the Author will feel that his labours have not been in vain.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHILST this work has been passing through the press, a letter has reached these shores full of interesting matter, concerning one who had occupied an important position in these pages ; and it will perhaps gratify the reader to become acquainted with its contents. It is superscribed to the Reverend George ——, chaplain to Newgate, from Mary Howell.

“ REVERED SIR,

“ Though I much fear that in your busy and active life, you will have retained no recollection of me, I yet write to you; to you who first recalled me to a sense of guilt, and at a time when all deemed me a condemned

felon, took compassion on me, and brought me to the feet of a crucified Redeemer, and poured balm into the wounds of my broken heart. I am not capable of describing to you the horrors of that voyage, the fearful scenes I daily witnessed, the profanation of the Sabbath, the swearing, the total disregard of all sacred things. After that you quitted the vessel and left us to our fate, darkness did indeed seem to hang over us; without a chaplain to lead us to better things, with a captain whose only aim was to keep all things straight, with a crew of felons, well may you imagine that our last state was worse than the first. Yet God had mercy on us, and preserved our lives through the many perils of a long and tempestuous voyage. Often did I wish that the sea would suck me into its bottomless pit; still your mild and soothing words occurred to my mind, and I endeavoured to recall all you had told me of a Saviour's love. I had a Bible with me,

(out of 200 convicts there were only three who possessed Bibles), and I read it night and morning to the other women. At first they scoffed and sneered,—alas ! as I had done to you !—but gradually they became interested ; they listened with attention, and ere long greedily sought for more knowledge of our Saviour. Bitterly did I lament my ignorance, and wish that there had been a chaplain on board, for had the seed been sown, some would have undoubtedly brought forth much fruit.

“ But, Sir, I shall weary you with my letter : suffice it to say that we reached New South Wales. The entrance to Sydney is beautiful, the trees rising from the water ; yet all the beautiful scenes that I saw, made me only more sad ; and the bright sun, appeared to shine with redoubled lustre as if to mock the feeling of intense shame that pervaded all our hearts !—for we felt we were isolated from all respectable beings ; that we were sunk to the

lowest grades of society. Oh! if my feeble testimony is believed, let it go to prove how bitter are the wages of sin; how bitter the stinging remorse that is sure sooner or later to arise: oh! that all who are tempted to do evil might know what my feelings were on the day in which I first set foot in this country. After long servitude and hard labour, I am now servant to a respectable person in Sydney; I am again amongst Christians, and may God mercifully keep me from further sin! One favour I beg of your hands, which is, that you will tell Miss Selby if she is still living, how earnestly I ask her forgiveness; how deeply I repent of all the evil I have brought on her. Lady Julia's screams continually ring in my ears. Can there be hope for such a sinner as I am? My health is failing fast; this climate does not agree with me: oh, comfort my parents! It will be well for them when I die, for I have brought sorrow and disgrace on their aged heads. May God

forgive me, for Jesus Christ his sake ! And
I am, revered Sir,

Your obedient and penitent Servant,

MARY HOWELL."

THE END.

